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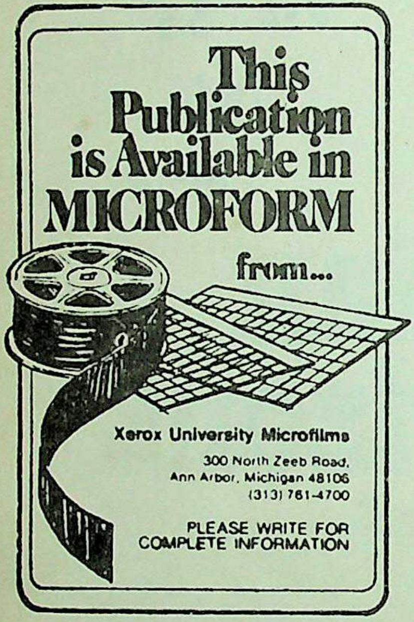
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## *INDIAN HORIZONS*

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The Council's publication programme, which takes in publication of books in English and foreign languages, is part of a large effort for strengthening cultural ties between India and the world, and thereby promoting mutual understanding, with which object the Council was founded in 1950. It is an autonomous agency of the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India.

Contributions are cordially invited. Manuscripts for consideration may please be sent in duplicate-typed with double spacing, with a minimum of footnotes, with line-drawings, if necessary—to *The Editor, Indian Council for Cultural Relations, Azad Bhavan, Indraprastha Estate, New Delhi-110002.*

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Editor: A. Srinivasan

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# indian horizons

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# THE MEDIA OF PUPPETRY

*Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay*

Scientists are studying intensively the relationship of every organism to its environment. The life chain that reaches from the tiniest organism in the human being affects each manifestation of life along the way.

The puppet theatre as a dramatic medium has the element to involve people emotionally, through the interaction of a group of characters. For unless carefully handled, plays dealing with the chosen theme may become merely propaganda, and therefore dull. The message you are trying to communicate must result indirectly from what happens to the characters on the stage. With the use of puppets the force of pictorial exaggeration, abstraction, stylisation can all be used to intensify the visual images which the narrative demands.

As actors, puppets can both emphasize and intensify by taking liberties, for they can ridicule and satirize; they can portray or give form to things imaginary and abstract, which are almost impossible to show on the stage by human actors. Abnormal scale relationships can be used for dramatic purposes, such as Man dominated by giant insects or other creatures; the power of machines can be "personalized" to enhance their qualities, good or bad. A perfect puppet concept is pictured by a bulldozer gnashing with it huge teeth the tiny blossoms in a flowen-field to show the mindless destruction of nature that goes on.

Some ideas can also be expressed through the use of symbols in puppetry. There is often a wide discrepancy between what is written in reports, or spoken by people in their own selfish interest, and what is actually the truth. It is essential, therefore, that some device be made available to show that what is being said is untrue, incomplete or biased. For instance a clacking mouth, hovering above the head, of a speaker can be used to alert the audience to the unreliability of the statements. Or a large question mark made to pop up at appropriate moments would prove a handy warning.

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A great deal of attention is now being paid to ecology and the environment, though public apathy and ignorance, corporate greed, economic pressure, administrative ineptitude and public conservatism still continue to slow down the efforts to "save the environment" as the slogan goes. Therefore there is a compelling need for every available resource to be thrown into the battle. In fact, ecology and environmental concerns open up a vast new realm for the puppet theatre. All the land of our planet Earth, the space and air above it, and the depths of the sea are open for puppets to visibly and demonstratively explore. For the environment, with vistas in every direction, offers a new dimension with the excitement of the most imaginative kind to the puppet theatre.

The underlying purpose of plays dealing with the environment is to make people aware of the realities of the problems Man faces, and to move them deeply enough to galvanise them into action. All people have to be regarded as potential audiences. By stimulating children to absorb knowledge of environmental problems and ways of solving them, we not only build the right attitudes for the future in the young, but also expect children themselves to have a strong influence upon the grown-ups. Puppet plays given by children may also be seen by adults, and help to awaken them to problems of littering, wasting paper and other materials, concern for animals, respect for trees and all vegetation, and any other aspect of the environment in which children and adults are equally involved. In short, conflicting human forces underlying many environmental problems can be effectively presented by puppets. While most puppeteers may be concerned with shows for the children in the environmental realm, it is equally essential adults be also approached—For it is necessary to prod the apathetic citizens who could not care less about things outside their immediate concern; to awaken the conscience of those whose greed for personal profit excludes any thought for the future of Man and the Earth; to commit the uncommitted, which includes all those who have not thought much about environment, but who are serious citizens and potential activists in its behalf.

Plays designed for adults, therefore, might well be presented at fairs, shopping centers, feasts and other civic celebrations. The growing concern of the people about many environmental issues is often vocally aired at public hearings, with slides, films and other visual materials. Many however, find them dull, repetitive. Instead a brief, well dramatized puppet play could be far more effective in this realm as also provide relief from the usual boring verbal statements and lectures and win over people more easily. For this reason environmental puppet plays should be a positive creative experience for everybody, those participating and those watching them.

In every community there are local threats to the environment which citizens must fight: a proposed highway through a park, an unnecessary dam, an unwelcome subdivision, inadequate wildlife protection laws, air and water pollution from industries etc. Sometimes it is necessary to rally all forces against abuses far from home, and these too need to be brought to the attention of childern as well as adults.

It is best to build scripts as needed by choosing the theme. The scenario can be agreed upon through discussion. Care should be taken to utilize the basic dramatic elements of conflict, suspense, and final resolution; the necessary characters chosen and their individual traits discussed.

In these days of Multi-media, all sorts of combinations of puppets with other media can be used.

If a series of environmental plays is planned, it would be useful to have a set of stock characters, because such presentations involve basic human types, which can over a period become familiar popular characters like those from old tales. It should be shown that not all those on the side of the environment are always completely right, nor are those basically concerned with industrial production and profits therefrom, always unmindful of conservation. Some of the characters would be the following:

Leaders of the several organizations dedicated to preservation of the environment, many of them strong, aggressive characters, who have had to fight every step of the way for their convictions, on their side, would be ardent youngsters, those who are not only energetic, but articulate in their efforts to "do something about the environment", There would also be lawyers, active in using the courts to enforce regulations, governing air and water pollution standards, and to halt projects which are deemed by environmentalists to be potentially damaging.

Against the forces of conservation are likely to be those who represent the commercial and vested interests like, big industrialists, directors of public utilities, large real estate operators indifferent to the environmental damage they do, and sometimes guilty of fraudulence; big timber companies ravaging forests, cutting more trees than they are replacing, and employing destructive timbering techniques; agriculturists wrecking through over-use of poisonous pesticides, threatening the very survival of nature.

Effective scenes can bo made with trees succumbing to the screaming saws with appropriate cries of agony as they fall; even Mother Earth might be personified to react to the groaning of bulldozers and other similar killers. Buildings too, might voice their opinions on Man's activities. Thus, an almost unlimited range of characters can be used on the puppet stage. Any type of puppet can be used including the shadow each having advantages of its own. Symbolic devices and large masks can be very effective.

Experience will prove that environmental problems offer a rich source for exciting or moving, humorous or tragic, puppet plays. Man's concern for the Earth is no passing fad; it is one of the most urgent problems which we face today and will continue to face into the foreseeable future. It is our belief that the capability of puppets for exaggeration, caricature, satire, as well as humour and compassion can be skilfully employed to present some of these themes to convey a message simultaneously entertaining the audience. □

# Music Culture of Peoples

## Tradition and Contemporaneity in Developing Countries

*Narayana Menon*

The phrase "developing countries" has many connotations. But I presume that I am to deal with the music cultures and problems of countries from Turkey to Korea, not to mention the many independent and developing states of the great continents of Africa and of Latin America. These include several major musical traditions with their own ancient and sophisticated concepts of theory and practice. I must confess straightaway that I am not competent to deal even with a fraction of these. I shall, therefore, confine my remarks to the music of India and deal with other areas only in passing. Incidentally, India and Pakistan who share the same musical tradition have a combined population equal to that of Europe and the United States put together. So it will not be a small minority culture that I shall be dealing with. Many of our problems have much in common with the problems of other developing countries.

The last forty years have seen the emergence of several new and dynamic independent nations in Asia and Africa. Along with independence came also a greater pride in the dormant traditions and achievements in the field of music and the arts. It is not as if these countries suddenly came of age culturally overnight. What has actually happened is that Europe and America which used to look down on these cultures as primitive, and relegate them to the field of "ethno-musicology" began to realise that these cultures are not just exotic curiosities for anthropologists to be studied as something apart from the mainstream of music, but that they are, in fact, an integral part of the mainstream of world music, often the deepest and the least ruffled.

This realisation has been helped by the tremendous and rapid developments in communication — not merely the ease and

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facility of travel from one part of the world to the other, but the availability over radio and television, and through the phonograph and the tape recorder, of the musical heritage of areas far apart from one another. As far as music is concerned, the map of the world is being redrawn and a tremendous revolution is in the offing, a revolution the significance of which has not yet been fully realised. Look at some of the extraordinary things happening around us today : Ravi Shankar Ali Akbar Khan teaching Indian music at American Universities; American, Japanese, Russian students studying music in India; Japanese composers writing Electronic Music; Alan Hovahness writing a suite based on an Indian novel; Peggy Glanville-Hicks writing an opera on an Indian theme; Benjamin Britten creating a work reminiscent of the Noh plays of Japan; Russian composers like Balasanian writing music for ballets based on Kalidasa's works; Maurice Bejart travelling in India for inspiration for his ballets; Yehudi Menuhin playing Indian ragas accompanied by Alla Rakha on the tabla. These things would have been unthinkable even twentyfive years ago.

Suddenly we are beginning to realise that music and the creation of music are not isolated activities in different parts of the world and at different periods of history; that at various stages of man's growth in different parts of the world, whether it be the ancient Sumerian Civilisation or Greek or Chinese or Egyptian or Indian, only small segments of this limitless world of sound have been explored and developed within the limits of man's awareness and faculties; that these segments, spread widely over time and space, are closely inter-related; that it is the sum total of all this that makes the world of music the many-splendoured wonder it is.

It is in this perspective that I would like to discuss the problems of the music of developing countries.

The situation is not a simple one, not merely because of the contradictions inherent in contemporary social life and organisation, but also because of the terminology we use. Take my own country, for instance. There are large areas of the country which could be described as medieval or feudal judging by modern contrivances and ways of living; yet there is a clear-cut understanding of the democratic process, and the percentage of peasants participating in demoncratic elections is a very high one. Large numbers of my countrymen are illiterate, but wise and politically and socially conscious. They are often described as superstitious and caste-ridden, but are capable of high sophistication in thinking. There are, of course, the more obvious contradictions. You can see primitive agricultural instruments outside atomic reactors and big steel plants; bullock carts side by side with jet planes. A people abjectly poor, yet gentle and happy; traditionally peace-loving, but heroic in war; a people with a multiplicity of religions, languages and ethnic groups, yet welded into a stable secular democracy.

One of our most distinguished Presidents was a philosopher; another was an educationist. Neither had ever campaigned in a political election, thrown mud on political opponents nor used harsh words about enemies. I am not suggesting — not for a moment — that all is lovely in the garden. What I am saying is that when we use words like 'politician', 'illiterate', 'developing', 'undeveloped', 'education', 'growth', quite often we don't mean the same thing, and we have to be careful. We don't even mean the same thing when we say 'pure melody' or 'harmony', 'ancient' or 'modern'. A 700-year old instrument like the Sitar we consider a comparative newcomer on the musical scene!

Take the word 'ethno-musicology'. In common American, even Western parlance it stands for the study of all music outside the mainstream of Western Music. By the same analogy, a scholar at one of the discussions of the Madras Music Academy used the word 'ethno-musicology' vis-a-vis Indian music to mean the study of the music of Europe from Palestrina to Brahms and Wagner. This would appear amusing to most of you here, because our assumptions are so different and we start from different premises. It is difficult for us to see ourselves as others see us.

In the preparation of this paper I was asked to say something about the contribution and the role of non-European countries with their rich folk-love and popular heritage and their young culture to music. Contribution to European music? An impetus, a stimulant, to creative activity for European composers? Or, contribution to the world of music? Or to human happiness? All non-European musical cultures are not cultures of folk-lore. India or Pakistan or Japan has its own art music distinct from its folk music — just as distinct as the music of Bach or Beethoven is from the fok music of Germany. Their culture is not young or developing, but often old and developed.

If I posed a similar question as a non-European — what is the contribution of European countries to the world of music today? — it would appear in a gathering like this somewhat embarrassing. So let me answer the question seriously and in the most meaningful way.

Our music is the expression of our consciousness, a measure of our fulfilment as human beings. And it reflects and expresses our most deep-felt emotions, our hopes and aspirations in an idiom that is a product of our environment, a language that has been developed and refined over many many years of growth and struggle. It is a part of our life and thought, and it has to be understood and appreciated and criticised in the perspective of our life and thought and philosophy. It has played a significant role in our fulfilment as human beings and in the integration of human relationships.

Its roots go back to some six thousand years. Possibly more, but I am limiting myself to recorded facts and history. The earliest system of music we know of is the Sumerian. Even 6000 years ago it was perhaps the crest, the most advanced state of ideas inherited from an even earlier pre-historic time. Music was an essential part of the orderly and ritualistic way of life of Sumera, the monumental temples echoing with words and music, voices and instruments. The Sumerian temple ritual seems to have been a most highly organised system of music of which we have fairly accurate and documented accounts.

Something of its glory and achievement overflowed into neighbouring areas — to Egypt with its own high civilisation dating back to the 4th millennium BC to India, to Greece.

India lies a little farther away, but its gateway in the north-west has been wide open to successive waves of the ebb and flow of these civilisations for some six thousand years. Harappa in the Punjab and Mohenjodaro in Sind bear eloquent testimony to this.

India both took and gave generously. From West Asia, from the earliest times of known history, right up to this day, India accepted, learnt and assimilated theories, practices, instruments, even nomenclature and conventions. And, in turn, she passed this on to the East — to Laos and Cambodia, to Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, even to Mongolia, China, Korea, Japan.

As a well-known scholar has put it: "The successive waves of peoples who have flowed into this sub-continent over some six thousand years... each bringing their own music with them, have made India a vast compound of musical lore into which its age-long tradition of classical music has frequently and abundantly dipped". But however numerous these influences, Indian music kept its identity. I am reminded of the famous words of Gandhiji who once said: "I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible, but I refuse to be blown off my feet by any of them".

There is much that is common to the systems of music from the Arab speaking countries and Iran to Vietnam and Indonesia — the pre-eminence of vocal music, the subtle rhythmic instruments and their important roles in every context, the nature of the melodic line, the significance of improvisation, the close relationship between music, the dance and the related arts. What is true of India is certainly true of Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Nepal, Sikkim. Concepts and attitudes are common to even more distant areas.

What are these concepts? Let me give you one example.

There is the story of a king who asked a sage to teach him how to make sculptures of the Gods. The sage replied : "If you do not know the laws of painting you can never understand the laws of sculpture". "Then", said the king, "be so kind as to teach me the laws of painting". The sage said : "It is difficult to understand the laws of painting without understanding the technique of dancing". "Please then instruct me in the art of dancing" said the king. "This is difficult if you do not study instrumental music" said the sage. "Please teach me the principles of instrumental music". "But" said the sage, "these cannot be learnt without a deep understanding of the art of vocal music". The king bowed in acceptance. "If vocal music is the source and goal of all the arts, please then reveal to me the laws of vocal music".

Even long before the Christian era Indian music had developed not only definite laws of theory and practice, but even comprehensive theories of appreciation. Ancient Indian texts describe music as a type of activity, a statement governed by a *rasa*. *Rasa* means flavour, that which gives character to a work of art and determines its quality. The ancient scholars studied carefully the physical stimulants to aesthetic enjoyment. They analysed the nature of emotion; the conditions and the themes which produce the emotion; the conditions and the results of such emotions; and even the nature of the sub-conscious mind, the involuntary emotions. Their methods were rational and, what is more, they put their conclusions to good practical use. The Greeks did this on a small scale. They realised, for instance, that the Doric mode was dignified and manly, and taught the Spartan boys nothing else. They were careful of the use of the Lydian mode which they thought voluptuous, licentious and orgiastic. Strabo, the Greek philosopher may have been thinking of this, among other things, when he acknowledged the debt of Greek music to India.

In the highest conception of art, religion and art are synonymous. This would be in accordance with the rationale of a hieratic society. Music is an instrument in the realisation of God. A song is a *yantra*, an apparatus of worship.

Such a serious concept of art would imply theories and standards of criticism and appreciation equally sophisticated.

Aesthetic experience is left to the *Rasika*, in our case, the listener. The musician simply creates the conditions. This explains why passive listening is almost impossible where Indian music is concerned. Keeping time, quite ostentatiously, at Indian concerts is not considered bad etiquette. The spectacle of a silent immobile audience holding its breath until the last phrase to applaud a fine performance is unknown in traditional Indian music circles where the most cultivated part of the audience often punctuates improvisations with nods of assent and little eulogistic phrases. *Rasaswadana*, the tasting of *rasa*, the appreciation of art, depends on the cultivated sensibility of the listener. Dhananjaya, an early medieval critic, in his *Dasarupa* says : "The *rasika's* own capacity to be delighted is the most important thing".

The history of this music has to be studied and understood not so much in terms of the music itself, but through various treatises which have come down to us. The main landmarks — at least until recent times — were not the great composers or their works, but treatises like the *Natya Sastra* of Bharata (circa 4th century, AD, the *Brihaddesi* of Matanga (circa 7th century AD, the *Sangita Ratnakara* of Sarangadeva (circa 13th century), the *Swara-Mela Kalanidhi* of Ramamatya (16th century) or the *Chathurdandi Prakasika* of Venkatamakhi (17th century). These embody extant knowledge and are in the nature of codifications of current theory and practice. There are hundreds of such texts which are authentic and authoritative, and are excellent indices to the development of the art.

In the pattern of this culture, music and the dance, the visual arts and poetry are all governed by the same attitudes. In all these the insistence is on emotional sincerity rather than on intellectual sincerity; on the lyrical impulse rather than on the dramatic impulse; on intuition rather than on reason; on contemplation rather than on action. The result is a subjectivism which is opposed to Western objectivism.

This tradition has to be understood in the context of Indian life and thought. Its present theory and practice are the logical development of a consistent process, a process which has been distinctive and which is an integral part of Indian history and culture. To listen to Indian music and judge it in terms of Western music or some other system will mean missing the point and reaching absurd conclusions. It will be like judging Beethoven or Brahms or Tchaikovsky in terms of *Raga* (the basis of Indian melody) and *Tala* (the basis of Indian rhythm). Questions of style, of interpretation, of finer and subtler points of execution cannot be discussed in any recognisable international terms. Aesthetics and attitudes can. Music is *not* an international language. All this talk of music being an international language is a facile over-simplification. Of course it is true of areas like Europe or Southern India or Northern India or West Asia — areas which have a common musical system but different spoken languages. But I have heard a great deal of Egyptian, Javanese, Japanese, Persian, Arabic, Indonesian, Chinese music —not to mention the various national styles of Europe — and I doubt if these constitute an international language. And values differ widely.

Take the voice for instance. It is the strangest yet the most expressive and challenging musical instrument in the world, and one that is common to all systems. But the attributes of a voice will be determined by what the voice is expected to do. Only a fully trained Western soprano can sing the aria of the Queen of the Night from *The Magic Flute* and only an Indian musician can do the *Viriboni Varna.* Stress on particular values too is important. The quality of the voice as such is comparatively unimportant in Indian music. In India the voice is no more of an asset to a singer than, say, good handwriting is to a poet. *What* a musician sings is far more important than *how* he sings. Every singer is a creative artist in the fullest sense of the word. In the West, a singer is a vehicle for the expression of other people's (the composer's) ideas and very often, as in so many operas, a voice is used just like any other instrument. In Europe a young man decides to become a singer if he has a good voice; in India a young man decides to become a singer if he is musical.

The most distinctive characteristic of this music is that it is purely melodic. I mean by pure melody, a melodic line that neither needs nor implies harmony. Harmony affects the structure of melody itself, and it has become almost impossible for the Westerner to conceive of melody without the implications, tacit or explicit, of a harmonic system. Indian melody is made up of notes which are related purely by their continuity. If this melody sounds exotic to the Western ear, it is probably because the West has lost the ear for *pure* melody and cannot take in melody neat as it were. Our use of "quarter-tones" is also relevant here. There is no such thing in Indian music as an exact quarter-tone, such as those used by Alois Haba or Bloch. But we do use in certain 'ragas' sharps which are sharper than the sharps of the diatonic scale and flats which are flatter. Tovey once said that the just intonation of a Wagner opera would need some 1000 notes to the scale! It is not the number of notes we use that is important. The important thing is how small an interval is of direct use and interest to us.

Like all melodic traditions, this is basically an oral tradition. Indian musical notation is adequate for purposes of preservation and analysis. But it has not been developed into a complete visual representation of the music for transcription and immediate performances. As Dr Ananda Coomaraswamy has pointed out, "the history of art in India (is) a history of pupillary succession... The art of music of the present day is a direct descendant of those ancient schools whose traditions have been handed down with comment and expansion in the guilds of the hereditary musician".

A tradition handed down with comment and expansion. This is the basis of traditional music education embodied in the *Gurukula* system. The word *Guru* is significant. He was more than a teacher. He was a preceptor. The *sishya* was more a disciple than a pupil. The *sishya* or disciple became an apprentice, as it were, to the teacher, living with him, travelling with him, listening to him continually over long periods, thus slowly imbibing the art. It was common for the *Guru*, the teacher, to instruct his disciple in Sanskrit, in Vyakarana, in history. There was, thus, all the time contact between teacher and disciple, continual communion in fact. It meant not merely the study of music, its theory and practice, but the acceptance of a way of life.

Our problem today is to provide students of music with teachers and teaching methods which will give them the most precious part of the *Gurukula* system without its chores; also give them a general education so that a student of music is a developed individual, and a practical and useful member of the community. This means that his musical education will have to be placed in the perspective of a wide education in the Humanities without resulting in any dilution of standards.

We have to realise that in Africa, Asia and other 'developing' areas we have millions of children who have fine musical sensibilities. Just as they speak different languages, so they are brought up in musical environments and musical traditions which are autochthonous. We have to help them develop their natural talent without doing violence to their natural and inborn susceptibilities. Their development should not alienate them from their social environment, nor from their traditional educational framework. I am not suggesting that they should be bottled up or marooned in islands of orthodoxy or primitive narrow concepts. But they should be helped to express themselves happily and freely in their own environment and the assistance should spring from a careful study and analysis of traditional methods which could be refined and strengthened. It should not take the form of the superimposition of alien methods which would sit heavily and unnaturally on the natural bent of the children.

One of the most importnat tasks facing us today is the preservation of our traditional musical cultures. This should not be confined to sporadic recording here and there, but should take the form of a systematic, comprehensive and meaningful programme. It is important that the most valid parts of the cultural traditions of areas should be preserved before any serious erosion takes place. In all such work it is essential to survey the total scene carefully and then set priorities.

There is the immense field of folk music waiting to be documented. Large numbers of manuscripts are scattered about waiting to be collected, tabulated, catelogued and microfilmed. Ther problem of 'editing' ancient texts will have to be given a new orientation. Texts have to be studied and their findings applied in the context of the 20th century if they are to be meaningful. Several centuries separate authoritative and accepted texts. They have to be placed in perspective, viewed chronologically and related to contemporary practices.

This is an immense challenge and an enormous responsibility. It will mean a continuing programme of conservation and development during which enduring values will have to be jealously guarded. Such a programme should take into account not only the whole field of the arts, but should be an integral part of the total scene in every developing country with its own special and pressing needs of socio-economic development and national integration. Only such a plan will lead to the full flowering of ancient traditions in the context of changing times.

I have stressed the problems of preservation. By this I do not mean putting a full stop at any given time in history to growth and that point as the norm for all times to come. Preservation should be seen not as an end in itself, but as a necessary pre-requisite to healthy growth and new development — for study, for analysis, for full comprehension; preservation to ensure continuity of growth; so as to keep vital links alive; so as to establish springboards for future achievement.

I have talked so far about our great inheritance; also the need for its preservation. What next?

Is this ancient tradition with all its sophistication and refinement adequate to meet the needs of our time? There are those who would like to cling to it, keep it pure and inviolate as if everything else is impure and wicked and false. There are others who feel that these traditions are relics of the past, the product of feudal ages which are at once an impediment and a burden to creative activity and freedom of expression. We are going through a period of transition with all its attendant restlessness and pressures from all sides. There are conflicts of ideas, misalliances as well as marriages, honest experiments as well as cheap imitations, genuine search as well as commercial vulgarisation. The old and the puritans moan the loss of traditional values; the young and enterprising cry out for new worlds to explore and conquer. We are in for an exciting era of change and revaluation. It can be frustrating and enervating at times. But it is the sure sign of a rebirth, the darkness before revelation, the transition from the past to the present and the future. □

# The Indian Theatre World and Historical Consciousness

*Indra Nath Choudhuri*

When I examine the general theme of this Conference 'Writer as a historical witness' I am reminded what Jerome J. Mc Gann has said about the vigorous promotion of a *text — only approach* of the last 35 years which has driven the historical critics out from the field[1]. Keeping the Indian view in mind I should say that in India the fight is not between the formalist and the historical critics also known as materialist literary scientist but between philosophy and history because here in India we think that on one side of literature there stays philosophy and on the other side it is hisotry but then a history which is constantly interpreted in a philosopohical way. Before I proceed further let me quote from *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship* by P.N. Medvedev and M.M. Bakhlin :

> Every concrete utterance is a social Act. At the same time that it is an individual material complex, a phonetic, articulatory, visual complex, the utterance is also a part of social reality. It organizes communication oriented towards reciprocal action, and itself reacts; it is also inseparably enmeshed in the communication event. Its individual reality is already not that of a physical body, but the reality of a historical phenomenon. Not only the meaning of the utterance but also the very fact of its performance is of historical and social significance, as, in general, is the fact of its realization in the here and now, in given circumstances, at a certain historical moment, under the conditions of the given social situation.[2]

The focus upon history what we call 'the past' achieves its critical fulfilment in defining the horizontal circumstances of human events but then there are vertical circumstances of human events which immobiles (universalises) a piece of art and its study then can be justified only by distancing of the art work or so to say by isolating it from our immediacy or historical time but not by negating it. After all Indian drama emphasises the evocation of the *rasa* rather than a realistic portrayal of actions and events. The relationship between reality and theatricality is a complex one. Reality has a time marker. Aristotle and his followers were preoccupied with the concepts of time and space in formulating their definitions of tragedy. This was inevitable on a tradition where drama was supposed to deal with a small section of life, focussing on a closed, circumscribed action. Indian dramatic tradition, on the other hand, did not have such compulsions, since drama was conceived as a 'representation of the states of all the three worlds'[3]. The Indian notion of time involving cyclicity did not put any constraint on drama in regard to its time aspect. Indian drama dealing with the ancient myths and legends, mixing the affairs of gods and heroes resolves the time problem by adopting a double time-order[4].

It embodies the experiences of the 'real' and the 'illusory' in the theatre as representational and presentational[5]. But then it does not accept a writer embodying the reality or acting as a historical witness. It is also not the critic who reveals the trans-historicity of the artefact in relation to its point of reception so as to reveal the significance of the past in and for the present and the future. The duel experiences described in Natya Shastra are not categories of experience but two systems of interpretation which the theatre-man uses in staging. His movements on stage do not deny the real world but then he frequently moves to another level, the world of Gods. We read in Isaiah, Ye are my witnesses saith the Lord, and I am God[6]. In a Tannaitic interpretation what God is saying to men is this: When you are my witnesses I am God, and when you are not my witnesses I am not God[7]. History is not an alienation from deity, but His programme and fulfilment. In Mahabharata Arjuna "discovers the meaning of his historical life, and at the same time gains liberation by understanding what *Krishna is* and what he *does*". It is the character or actor of the drama who acts as a witness of history which is not only human but divine. So the invocatory poem (Nandi) in the Sanskrit plays puts the action of the drama in a framework of time having linear tension and a cyclical rhythm or the divine and the human time. It is the actor who is the most important factor in this scheme. God is also an actor. He is known as *Natraj* (Shiva) or *Natnagar* (Krishna). In an oft-quoted prayer to Lord Shiva we find a cosmic design of the dramatic spectacle: "We bow to the noble (Sattvika) Lord Shiva whose bodily movements and gestures (angika) are the entire universe, whose speech (vachika) is all the written word, and whose costume and make-up (aharya) are the moon and the stars". So it is the actor who regulates Time (both historical and universal) as a Centring Principle of Indian Theatre World. The Natya Shastra (Treatise of theatrical activity) ascribed to Bharata (2nd cen. BC—2nd cen. AD is the oldest source of information on the Indian theatre world. Aristotle interprets theatre in terms of large human experience whereas Bharata restructures human experience as theatre and thereby develops a mythic world view. In the beginning Bharata says that he is relating the canons of Drama, as these were uttered by Brahma (Creator). This establishes the ahistroical rhythm of the universe which obliterates the historical time. The universal time or timelessness focuses our attention on *eternity* not on time or history as understood in the western way. In Indian context it is the myth-making function of history that underlies its dynamic force in moulding the social life, morality and culture of a people. So Kalhana the famous Indian historian, following the traditions of Indian histriography says that the historian must possess the divine perception of the poet resembling Prajapati (Creator). The last chapter of the treatise deals with the 'epilogue' of the legend of conflict between the Gods and the demons. Performers are cursed for satirizing the gods; and the art of theatre is brought down from heaven to earth by one king Nahusha[8]. This legend of descent contains a hidden symbolic meaning. It is in line with a cultural tradition where heaven and earth or eternity (timelessness) and the historical time or sacred and profane overlap, interact and mix to create artistic forms and practices of astonishing complexity and power. In other words a man's understanding of the world and of himself what is known as historical consciousness here in the context of the Indian theatre world operates on two levels. It has both a *cyclical* rhythm and *linear* tension.

The double time-order reveals the basic nature of Indian art which knows no antithesis between the immediate and the ultimate, the earthly and the heavenly, even the sensuous and the transcendental,the enjoyment (Bhakti) and liberation (Mukti)[9]. Initially the treatment of time in the ancient epics indicates how with the help of the narrator-listener structure eternal and temporal time-dimensions was established. In the Mahabharata the narrator introduces the characters of the epic as dramatis personae and allows them to converse. In the process one of the characters, Krishna, holding the temporal flow of the narrative creates the Bhagawadgita and thereby creates a divine time-order to be understood along with the temporal dimensions of time. This structure of double time-order enables to create a partnership between man and deity in history. Eliade gives a good explanation of this. He notes that Krishna teaches that reality is dynamic, not static deity is unremittingly engaged in action. History is not an alienation from deity but his program and fulfilment. Recurrently deity reveals himself in a way appropriate to the 'historical moment'. Krishna holds out to man 'the exemplary and soteriological value of the divine model[10]. When one understands the profundity of the concept of the partnership of man and deity, one realises that history has also been a search of man by God. So in India God descends on this earth as a human being again and again to establish the operation of time on two levels.

In the classical period of the plays of Kalidasa this is very much evident. In fact in Indian context *Itihasa* (history) does not denote merely an event that took place — but an event that would always happen and repeat itself in certain circumstances. In other words the linear tension of history explains the phenomenon that one is bound to be conscious of his historical time because one has sinfully departed from the eternal archetypes but, at the same time, his eyes remain set on the sacred timeless. The linear tension is over when one becomes part of the cyclical rhythm. All cosmic events are cyclical and subject to an eternal return. Recurrent events are a guarantee of reality, because it implies faithful adherence to an eternal and sacred archetype. So in the *Bharata Vakya* of Shakuntala it is said, 'May Shiva's dazzling power destroy my cycle of rebirths'. In fact the play indicates the journey of the hero from attachment to non-attachment, from temporarility to eternity, from flux to timeless, from history to eternal truth. In the first act when the king Dushyanta enters the hermitage where stays Shakuntala he feels an omen, 'The hermitage is a tranquil place, yet my arm is quivering... do I feel a false omen on love or does fate have doors everywhere'[11] This only indicates that the king is attached to wordly love and pleasure and is bound by historical time. But by the time the seventh act enfolds itself the action takes place in heavenly regions where ordinary time does not count any more. The king has also travelled a long way from the wordly attachment to unbounded divinity so in seventh act when he feels an omen again he says, 'I have no hope for my desire, why does my arm throb in vain'[12].

The Indian concept of Karma is lineal which intertwines past, present and future into one single time sequence. Karma theory explains one's present as the result of his past and future as the exposition of one's present action. In other words Karma stands for linear tension or the temporality of a linear order. So to escape from Karma is to escape from time. This time sense (anti-climactic) is clearly demonstrated in the ideal of anti-climactic sexual pleasure, attained through prolonged temporal diffusion of sensation which does not end in orgasm also shown in the plot of Sanskrit drama which is anti-climactic[13]. The dramatic structure of a Sanskrit play is cyclical but the various devices used such as the dream, the trance, the premonition, the flashback are to disrupt the linearity of time and make the action recoil upon itself so as to create a spiritual equilibrium, poise between opposites, rest and fulfilment at the centre of violent motion. Greek drama in its conclusion presents a denouement or a climax but Sanskrit drama ends with a tying together of diverse threads — an anti-climactic end juxtaposing cyclical time with life idealistically conceived. The Sanskrit play is not a river ending in the sea, either in mystical union with God or in fulfilment of human ambition. Rather, it is a celebration of a cosmic poise ever present in our linear existence. The *damaru* (double headed drum) in one of Shiva's hands popularly known as the king of actors explains this juxtaposition artistically as well as pragmatically. *Damaru* is the traditional symbol of time. From the junctions or the point where the *damaru* is held, the striker reaches out, striking the base of either of the two cones as it is moved. In time symbols, the junction is present, the two cones are past and future. The symbol thus is an exemplification of the cyclic concept of time[14]. This is played by Lord Shiva also known as *Mahakala*, the eternal time thereby suggesting the double time order. In fact Man in the Indian theatre world moves on two levels — the divine and the worldly. In the divine level time is indivisible eternity, it is cosmological in meaning and significance. In the wordly level time is at the root of all perceptions of change, of joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain, growth and decay, birth and death. Man in Indian theatre articulates both these concepts at one and the same time.

The historical consciousness is related with one's understanding of the world and of oneself. In the medieval period Indian traditional theatre forms like Yakshgana, Terukuttu, Ankia Nat, Jatra, Tamasha, Bhawai, Rasaleela etc., arose and have continued ever since. Here also the idea of human souls retaining their eternal spiritual identity, in union with God and yet separate as cells within an infinite spiritual organism made the whole theatric experience two-dimensional. It is simultaneously eternal and temporal, concrete and abstract where the actor is a timeless symbol with contemporary validity and meaning.

In the 19th century, after our contact with the Western literature and theatre a historical attitude of the western type came to be developed in Indian dramatic writing marking our reaction against the traditional view about history. In fact it was the concern for the political hisotry to the detriment of the cultural history that created a new kind of historic consciousness. But very soon the Indian dramatists realised that the dramatic art which they were developing was by and large alien with its aesthetic approach and staging methods and completely different from what was prevalent here for centuries and as a result their historical consciousness became partial and non-directive. This inevitably led to a search for authenticity and identity, for distinct Indian dramatic form which would link this drama to our long and varied tradition, and would also enrich and develop it.

Going for tradition means opting for a historical sense which is a sense both of the timeless and the temporal[15]. The "sense of the timeless as well as the temporal" as Eliot came to appreciate in *Four Quarters* especially is perhaps, as S.C. Harrex said, more inalienably ingrained in certain Eastern cultural traditions than it is in the tradition of "the literature of Europe from Homer"[16]. The operative sensibility of Indian writer is utterly traditional and their historic sense has retained its mythic origins. Of course, a process of alienation is very much visible in the writings of 30s and 40s because of a rational approach of our writers against many of our social beliefs but without replacing them by any positive alternative. The deep-rooted traditionalism in Indian psyche, in such situations, can make us only an imitator of the Western realistic theatre and its values. Theatre persons like Habib Tanvir made a concentrated effort to liberate Indian theatre from this and start on a journey of search for roots. In one of the seminar papers on 'The Crisis of identity and question of authenticity in theatre' Habib Tanvir has asserted that immediately after gaining independence, perhaps the worst crisis that we as a nation began to face was the crisis of identity. We began to look like a nation that was aping the West not only in our technology, but also in our bureaucratic institutions, our educational system, our aspirations, our way of life, our mode of thinking, our own manner of pursuing theatre. From the fifties with the *Mitti ki Gadi* and *Agra Bazar* Tanvir set in the trend for going back to tradition. During this time Girish Karnad wrote his *Hayavadana* which begins with the prayer 'Jai Gajavadane' heralding the return of Lord Ganesha, the presiding deity of traditional theatre. The presiding deity of theatre reminded

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us that the reality shown on the stage is a part of bigger reality. We began to realise that we cannot possibly portray our own unique reality except through modes and methods indigenous to our own culture. The important work done in this direction early in the century by Rabindranath Tagore has been carried forward by playwrights like Girish Karnad, Chandrasekhar Kambar, Vijay Tendulkar, Kavalam Narayana Panikkar, Ratan Kumar Thiyam and others. Social awareness is dominating among them but in their search of a theatre which will belong to the soil they have explored the myths, used the indigenous forms and pesented the inner and outer life simultaneously in one action. They have, once again, made us realise that the Indian society is permeated by religion and living myth, endowed with a psychic landscape having its own concepts of time and space. The personal sensibility of these playwrights have of course added a new dimension in their historical sense. They have evolved a flexible dramatic art where the transcendental view of *Kala* (time) which is the spiritual world view and most useful for individual salvation, is not only responsive to deliberate changes of collective efforts and living but also to a view of ideal humanity in this world. It can be termed as an effort to solve the linear tension not just by juxtaposing it with the cyclic rhythm (timeless age) but by giving it an integral vision of the march of humanity towards an idealistic larger than the simple humanlife. The play *Chand Baniker Pala* (The play of Chand the Merchant 1977) by Shambhu Mitra reveals a plot which is "burningly real and yet etherially transcendent" At the same time in the process of tackling the agonising symphony of the modern predicament he incorporates all the longings, whisperings and aspirations of the soul. The hero as an archetypal character fights a battle against his destiny and while passing through all odds does not lose his confidence and goes on shouting "Across, across, let us sail across the stream". With a screech the historical time gets arrested and we observe the rush of eternity not as something spiritual but as deep human experience. The performer as an historical witness draws on the stage the historical realities as the manifestations of the *kriya-shakti* which evolves itself without disturbing the concept of Indian *Kal* in the form of enduring totality.

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6. Isaiah, 43 : 12.
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15. T.S. Eliot in his influential essay 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' (1919) has said that the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. This historical sense, whch is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his own contemporaneity, Selected Prose (ed. by John Hayword), p. 23, (1953).
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# Tagore Songs : An Aesthetic Approach

*Sitansu Ray*

Even before completing twenty, the young Rabindranath asserted and announced with utmost self-confidence

> "I esteem music more than the singers do. They place music on some inanimate notes, I establish it on eternal vital feelings." (translated)

This very assertion may be used as the foremost clue to our aesthetic approach to Tagore songs. At the risk of adverse reactions from the classicist corners he severely criticized average classical vocalists, especially professional ones and at the same time he opened up newer possibilities for the advancement of Bengali songs by setting forth his prodigious creativity even from that young age.

It is not that Tagore altogether rejected classical music. He exploited various models of classical compositions for a considerable part of his own creativity. Apart from that, he had an inherent intuitive grasp of the essence of various Indian classical melodies (i.e., *raga*s and *ragini*s), which he, off and on, used in his own compositions. What he could not stand, and rejected altogether, was classicism as such, I mean, average vocalist's (*Ostad*'s) way of rendering, full of acrobatics, grimaces, repititions, too much lengthening, jugglery with notes and rhythmic feats etc. That is why, in his own songs, Tagore resorted to simplicity of rendering. He avoided rhythmic multiplications (*laykari*) in his *dhrupad*-based songs and too much tonal improvisation and variation in his *kheyal* and *tappa*-based songs, which, if done at all, must be at the cost of lyrical clarity. After all, his songs are based on aesthetic fusion of lyrical beauty and musical simplicity as opposed to classical pedagogic complexity. Tonal ornamentations in Tagore songs are very much restrained and precalculated.

In later life he revised a bit his former stern criticism of classical music. He said :-

"I shall admit today that the opinion, I had once expressed

> with vaunting arrogance, is not truthfully justifiable. The art of music has its own intrinsic characteristic and function. When music is accompanied with words, the cluster of words should not supersede music as it is nothing but the carrier of music. Music is glorified with its own wealth. Why should it be a slave to semantics?;... When a melody can uniquely evoke our consciousness with pure tonal entity, therein lies musical excellence". (tr.)

Yet, regarding Bengali songs he had some reservations. He referred to the history of Bengali songs from *Vaishnava*-songs down to Nidhubabu's compositions, where music had been in close alliance with lyric. In his own compositions, he maintained a balanced compromise in between the two extreme views cited above. He insisted again and again on the point that Bengali songs must not copy Hindustani trends. It must maintain its own creative identity. Tagore songs, even classical-based ones, are the best examples of this.

Next, we may pass on to Tagore's treatment with the country-music of Bengal in general and *Baul* in particular. He was very much sensitive to various forms of country-music, prevalent during his time. Especially, he cherished soft corner for *Baul* and *Sari* songs. But while applying their tunes in his own compositions, he avoided their rustic elements, turned them a bit refined and sophisticated upto his own personal taste so that the tunes may suit his lyrics. Let us refer to his own saying :-

> "I have taken up the tunes of *Baul* in many of my songs, and in many other of my songs *raga*s and *ragini*s have been absorbed with the melodies of *Baul* whether to my awareness or not. This reveals that the melody and lyric of *Baul* have been easily assimilated into my mind." (tr.)

Similar is his treatment with *Kirtan*. He was an admirer of *Kirtan*, especially of its musico-emotional entity and in his own songs he applied its aesthetic essence.

Not only from various parts of Bengal, but also from various provinces of India Tagore collected suitable tunes and very often moulded them upto his artistic needs. It is not that Tagore followed others, nor is it that Tagore-music is an accumulation of various other prevalent musical elements. Because, all the elements have been turned anew with the touch of Tagore's own musical personality. Therein lies the magic by which Tagore-music have acquired its own speciality and characteristics.

The point will be clearer when we compare Tagore-songs with the songs of Nazrul. Nazrul collected a style as it is. He was much more objective in this respect. When he picked up an Arabian tune or a tune of the far east, for example, he maintained their verisimilitude in his own songs. On the countrary, Tagore was temperamentally subjective. As a result, every tonal component has been turned into what may be called Tagorean style. That is why when a sensitive listener listens to even an unknown Tagore-song for the first time, he easily identifies it as nothing but a Tagore-song. That is one of the reasons why Tagore-music has been justifiably categorized as a special class, supreme and unique in its aesthetic ideology.

The differentiation between Tagore and Nazrul appears somewhat like the differentiation between Bethoven and Bach. While Tagore and Bethoven attained the depth of subjective uniqueness, Nazrul and Bach achieved objective perfection.

May be, we are posing to evaluate them in this manner to clarify our point and the composers themselves were not at all aware of the point raised.

Our main point is that Tagore's style is unique in character despite its sundry tonal and stylistic components.

The influence of western music on Tagore songs need not be over-emphasized in the manner it is usually done. Of course, there are a few examples of Tagore-songs set to western tunes especially in his earliest music-drama *Valmiki-Pratibha.* But, those are just nominal materials. More nominal are the stray cases of his experimentations in the most elementary uses of harmonization in Vedic hymns or in his own songs.

What is more important is his re-evaluation of Indian music by way of comparing it to western music. Off and on he compared the two and observed the following facts :-

The germ of Indian music is its melody while the essential embodiment of western music is its harmony. The notes of Indian melodies have some relationships among one another by virtue of *shruti* (micro-tones) and subtle appliations of *meends* (glide), *gamaks* etc. while the notes of western music are clearly distinct from one another, and that is why key-board instruments are unsuitable for Indian Music.

Above the composer's composition, the performer takes the liberty of elaboration, improvisation and extemporization in Indian music. On the contrary, the executionist in the western music can have no liberty over the set composition of the composer. But while the rhythmic structure of Indian music is rigid, that of western music is flexible. Its tempo rises and falls according to the mood to be expressed in western music.

Tagore analogized the solo performance of Indian melody with the infinite oneness of still midnight and the multitudinous character of western music with the din and bustle of active day time.

In all the above discussions, Indian music is to be understood in a broader sense to include Tagore's own music, excepting the point of improvisation and extemporization, where he had his holistic reservations.

On the whole, Tagore-music is essentially Indian in character whatever element it may incorporate.

It may appear truism to say that the aesthetic quality of Tagore-songs lies in its fusion of words and tunes. Yet the principle of fusion demands newer and newer discussion.

Both the word and the tune had been primarily originated from the same source, which is the human vocal organ. With the same organ, man had learnt to speak and to produce tune. It is the innate and primordial musical instrument for both articulation and note-production.

Again, the word and the tune are addressed to the same sense-organ, that is, the auditorial sense-organ.

But these are not the main principles of their fusion since the word and the tune are structurally and semiologically quite different from each other. Vocal sounds, when articulated, produce vowels and consonants. Vowels and consonants constitute the word. Words constitute sentence. Thus language evolved. In course of time, prose has become the preserve and carrier of philosophy, science and history etc. In poetry, language took the help of rhetoric and prosody not only for expressibility but also for, and perhaps mainly for, suggestivity and evocation.

In the earliest music culture of any country, it is seen that music was oiginally associated with poetry. Pure music evolved later on. Musical instruments were formerly used for accompaniment with vocal music. By virtue of talented specialization evolved instrumental music, which is the embodiment of pure music.

The word stands for something else, some object, idea or action. Unless this, the word, the sentence and the language have no usability. On the other hand, musical notes and the whole forms of music mainly stand for themselves. Musical tune is incapable of translation. It cannot be substituted by any other thing and it has no paradigm. May be, according to Herbert Spencer's speculation, what man uttered turned into words and *how* they uttered them (the change of pitch) was the original germ of musical notes.

Rabindranath Tagore, in his early life, subscribed to the elaborated Spencer's speculations. But later on, he observed as follows :-

> "Tune itself is a dynamism. It vibrates in itself. Words have to plead for semantics. Such is not the case with tune, which expresses nothing but itself. Some particular notes, combining with some other particular notes produce a tonal ensemble. Rhythm adds dynamism to it. The acceleration infused in our heart by this tonal dynamism is a pure passion, without any other connection. Generally we are stimulated with pleasure and pain in connection with some particular events in our world. But when musical tune moves our consciousness, it does so with direct contiguity. So, the passion it generates is altogether unaccountable". (translated)

If this be the case, it is very difficult to find out any satisfactory principle of union between the word and the tune. Yet, apart from the specialized branches of pure poetry devoid of music and pure music devoid of poetry, the song-form of music synthesizing the two has been successfully evolving. The union, or rather, the fusion of the word and its music is something like the union of the concrete and the abstract, the form and the formless, the finite and the infinite, the known and the unknown, the speakable and the unspeakable, the earth and the firmament and the like. Of course, the tune cannot be called formless as it has its sonorous form however much ethereal it may be. In a good song, the words tend to transcend and the tune tends to come down to tangibility, and by this way they are united.

Tagore metaphorized this union in various ways. Sometimes he called the word and the tune as twin brothers, sometimes two sisters, sometimes brother and sister, and very often husband and wife. From time to time, the poetry is the husband, the tune its wife, and sometimes the reverse. Another instance is also found where Tagore called them as two co-wives, one very often tends to suppress and dominate over the other.

The most ideal metaphor, Tagore used, is that of *Ardhanareeshwar*, i.e., the deity whose one half is feminine and the other masculine.

Helmholtz said in *On the Sensations of Tone* —

> "The union of music to words is most important, because words can represent the cause of the frame of mind, the object to which it refers, and the feeling which lies at its root, while music expresses the kind of mental transition which is due to the feeling".

Some other comparison is found where Tagore quoted Gluck —

> "My idea was that the relation of music to poetry was much the same as that of harmonious colouring and well-disposed light and shade to an accurate drawing, which animated the figures without altering their outlines".

Regarding relative importance of words and music in song there was a running argumentative discussion in the issues of Vichitra of 1344 B.S. (i.e; 1937-38). In a issue, Tagore firmly wrote —

> "Man has been singing songs assimilating words and music. There was no argumentation regarding the relative supremacy of tune or words. If any debate is opened at all, I would say that music itself is the husband who has uplifted language in its own clan". (tr.)

It is really so and true to his own songs also. Tagore songs are excellent not only by virtue of his poetic talent but also for his extraordinary music personality. He said that a good song adopts its words by virtue of its own intrinsic adoptability. In Tagore's musical creativity, sometimes tune was the predecessor and words followed, sometimes words were written first and then set to tune, and sometimes words and tune came simultaneously. But in each case their synthesis was artistically done and the whole thing acquired a special style which may be called Tagorean.

Both poetry and music are time art and dynamic. Human mind is also dynamic. When their intensity and tempo synchronize, the fusion is caused between words and their musical rendering, or, so to say, between the tune and its lyrical content. In other words, the lyrical depiction turns sonorously colourful along with the tune. Gluck referred to this very fact. In ancient Sanskrit text a melody or *raga* has been defined as some tonal form which tinges our mind. Tagore also subscribed to this attribute of a melody. Moreover, he believed that apart from the colourfulness of a *raga*, it is also associated with the intrinsic illumination of human heart. This realization is much more animated than Gluck's pictorial analogy, because picture is a static art while the poetry and music of a song, along with the human heart creating and enjoying them, are always in motion. This common dynamic quality brings them together in a happy artistic fusion. *Raga* may be taken here broadly to include any good tune or melody of art-song.

G.E. Lessing, in the appended notes of his *Laocoon*, said that song should not be considered the union of the two arts, but rather one and the same art. Matthew Arnold, in his poem "Epilogue to Lessing's *Laocoon*" ascribed supremacy of poetry over painting and music, since poetry incorporates elements of both painting and music, and it can depict the continuous stream of life. Tagore, in his early life, read the poem thoroughly, explained it upto his own realization, and put forth his own observations that the art of music, in the course of its gradual advancement, would be able to express the dynamism of life instead of choosing a single lyrical feeling. His hypothesis, foretold in his essay *"Sangit O Kabita"*, got gradually actualized by virtue of his creativity in variety of songs, music-dramas and dance-dramas, where words and tunes go united in the perspective of emotive human life. Needless to say, variety of rhythmic structure along with suitable tempo add to the ups and downs of that emotive sonority.

Apart from various traditional rhythms Tagore invented some other rhythmic patterns in course of his experimentations with some unconventional lyrical structures set to music. In such songs, rhythmic divisions and accents have been quite natural, and germane to the natural pronunciation of the wordings. *Byakula bakulera phule* and *ye kandane hiya kandichhe* of nine beats, and *Kampichhe dehalata tharo tharo* of eleven beats are the best examples of this.

So we see that despite unique tonal and rhythmic forms Tagore songs are something more. In more than ~~two~~ five thousand songs as complied in the *Gitavitana*, one may notice variegated things of subtle sensuousness in the forms of devotional fervour, love sentiments, communion with nature, patriotic spirit and many other innumerable and unamountable feelings. Tagore songs are pluralistic in outward manifestations but monistic in inward realization.

For facilitating use and understanding, Tagore categorized his songs into six broad groups which are *Puja* or devotional songs, *Prem* or love-songs, *Prakriti* or songs of nature and seasons, *Vichitra* or songs of intricate feelings not defined for grouping otherwise, and *Anusthanik* or ceremonal songs. Apart from these, there are music-dramas *(Kal-mrigaya, Valmiki-Pratibha* and *Mayar Khela)*, dance-dramas (*Chitrangada, Chandalike* and *Shyama*), other theatrical songs, more songs on devotion and prayer, and, on love and nature in the third part of *Gitavitana*, compiled a bit later.

Among all those, devotion, love and nature are the most principal sources of Tagore's creativity. We do not undervalue *Swadesh* and *Anusthanik* groups. But, actually Tagore's patriotic songs cropped up mostly with the enthusiasm generated during a transitional historic condition of Bengal and India. From the core of his heart, he was not a chauvinist, but rather a lover of mankind as a whole. As regards the *Anusthanik* songs, they were originated or rather necessitated for ceremonial, situational and specific purpose. Of course, most of them have trancended their temporal purport.

The most innate, primordial and essential forces of Tagore's life-long musical creativity were concerned with devotion, spiritualism and the *Religion of Man*, Love or the sublime erotic feeling, and the sensitivity for the natural world around us. The divisions are never like water-tight compartments. Very often, they are inter-mingled and overlapped. That is, some nature songs are surcharged with love, some devotional songs are based on nature, some love songs and some devotional songs are on the border-line of each other in the perspective of nature etc. for example, when Tagore sang—

*Amare karo tomara veena*
*Laho go laho tule,*
*Uthibe baji tantriraji mohana angule.*

(Do make me your *veena*, take hold of me and let my strings resonate with your lovely fingers). tr.

it might be taken both devotionally or erotically. While grouping, it was incorporated in love category. The tune is typically *Khambaj* and the rhythm *dadra.* When the chorus in the drama *Arupratan* sings—

*Amar abhimaner badale aj*
*nebo tomar mala*
*Aj nishisheshe shesh kore dii*
*chokher jaler pala.*

(Today, I shall win your garland in lieu of my touchy sentiment. Tonight, before day-break, I shall close the chapter of my tearful days). tr.

the ethos is a composite mixture of love and devotion. The tune is a fine synthesis of *pilu* and *kafi*, and the rhythm, *dadra.* In *Geetabitan*, it is categorized as a devotional song—

Let us notice the song—

*Ei to tomar alokdhenu surya tara dale dale—*
*Kothay bose bajao benu, charao maha gagantale.*

The infinite sky is taken as the cattle-ground. The sun and the stars are as if the cattle. The lord *Krishna* is as if playing the flute to tend the cattle. The Vaishnavite mythology has been turned anew in the greater perspective of the cosmic world. The tune is a bit deviated form of *Kedar* and the rhythm is *jhampak*, introduced by Tagore, consisting of five beats of three plus two divisions.

Numerous examples can be cited. But the aim of this article is not so, and, the length will not permit many.

The most congenial atmosphere of Tagore's seasonal songs will be amidst natural surroundings far from din and bustle of town life. We must admit that professional singers cater Tagore songs with utmost technical perfection through radio, television, disc records, cassettes, films or highly sophisticated auditorium. But when someone sings at Santiniketan during spring *Shukno pata ke ye chhaday* or *klanta yakhan amrakalir kal*, we need not expect michophonic perfection. The songs and the terrain complement, and contribute to, each other.

There will be much difference between the atmospheres of an air-conditioned auditorium and of the shal-avenue for the song —

*Shaler bane theke theke*
*Jhad dola dey henke henke*

sung in open-voiced solo or chorus during the rains.

We cannot conceive of a better atmosphere of a devotional Tagore song than that successfully sung in a *Vaitalik* or in the worship-session of the temple at Santiniketan.

The plan and programme of seasonal festivals with music and dance, and all such aesthetic activities have been aimed at enriching life with artistic and aesthetic ethos. According to Tagorean ideal, music should not be mere entertainment, it should be part and parcel of our life.

All the six seasons as prevalent in Bengal have been musicalized by Tagore in his songs. The greatest in number are the songs of the rainy season. Kalidasa had written *Meghadutam*, Tansen had created *Mia-ki-Malhar* and some Vaishnava lyricists had composed tryst-lyrics *(abhisara-pada)* of monsoon night. Their excellence, novelty and variety as if came unifiedly anew through Tagore's monsoon-songs quite unforeseen even in the history of India's musico-poetic culture.

In his spring songs, we can enjoy variegated imageries of subtle feelings set to highly characteristic tunefulness and suitable rhythmic patterns. Their aesthetic ethos are something more than what we enjoy in the depiction of spring in Kalidasa's *Kumarasambham*, Jayadeva's *Geetagobindam* or in the North-Indian *Holi*, or *Dhamar* songs.

Similarly, the changing natural atmosphere along with the intricately changing human moods have been most artistically sonorified in Tagore's all other songs of different seasons.

Another interesting thing to note is that quite a good number of Tagore songs at the start of both devotional and love categories are songs about music and its associated sensibilities and communications.

More we search and research, we find that the realm of Tagore songs is the unified field of all the finer faculties of human mind as reflected in this tangible world or in the greater level of cosmic realization.

Aesthetic approach to Tagore songs will be more substantiated and complete if we bring into consideration the musical metaphors he extensively used in almost all the branches of his literature. Expressions of sensitivity through musical terms in such metaphors cannot be superficial rhetorical usage since Tagore's personality itself was musical. Experiences of life got synthesized with music in Tagore's artistic personality. As a result, musical metaphors cropped up.

Let us come to some selected specific examples. First, let us notice the poem "*Komal Gandhar*" of the poetical work *Punascha*. *Komal Gandhar* means the minor third, which is used with delicate nuances in *Kafi*, *Pilu*, *Kanada*, *Malhar*, *Multani*, *Todi*, *Bhairavi* and in various other ragas. In many Tagore songs, there are diverse applications of this note. The said poem empathically reveals Tagore's aesthetic reaction to this note and its association with some soft corner of his heart:

> "I have called here *Komal Gandhar* . . .The tanpura of her life is sonorously attuned, but she is quite unaware of it. Her movements and pauses, and all her chores are resonant with the *tans* of *Bhairabi*, the mystery of which I am unable to make out. That is why I have given her the name *Komal Gandhar*. I can't realize why tears of my eyes glide out from the core of my heart whenever she casts her glance." (tr.)

The tuned *tanpura* here semitically represents a flawlessly beautiful life. *Tans* here stand for her spontaneous movements. *Komal Gandhar* signifies feminine softness and the *meend* (glide) of tears is the expression of the poet's affectionate bent. Delicate applications of *Komal Gandhar* may be noticed in the songs like *Keno bajao kankana kana kana kato chhala bhare (Kafi), Sakhi oi bujhi banshi baje (Pilu), Sakaruna benu bajaye ke yay (Bhairavi), Tomara geeti jagalo smriti nayana chhalachhaliya (Pilu-Malhar* or such a mixed type tune). In devotional songs, the uses of this note produce some different sentiments such as in *Hriday amar prakash holo ananta akashe (Kafi-Pilu), Din yadi holo abasan* (*mixed-Multani*), *Ebar nirab kore dao he tomar mukhar kabire (*moulded *Kanada*). In traditional North Indian music, *Kafi* and *Pilu* are associated with frivolous sentiments. In Tagore, these are also associated with utmost serenity, sublimity and calmness.

Let us come back to musical metaphor again, used in a separate context. A significant metaphor of the rhythm *Jhamptal* has been used by Tagore in an amazingly novel way in his novel *Shesher Kabita* when Amit tells Banya—

> "The course of history of human life is like this. Apparently it may seem to be regular and successive. But actually it is a chain of unexpected events. Creations evolve through sudden collisions and unexpected blasts. Phases of time proceed in *Jhamptal.* Banya! you have changed the rhythm of my life and in this rhythm the tune of your life has come to synchronization with that of mine". (tr.)

When Amit was in Shillong, a sudden collision between his motor car and that of Labanya (callecd Banya by Amit) brought them into meaningful acquaintance with each other. The accident was not serious. Rather, this collision changed the course of their lives. They happened to come closer to each other. The impact of unforeseen events of human life is symbolized by the unequal beats of *jhamptal.* The metaphor need not be taken too seriously to argue over the fact that the divisions of the beats of *Jhamptal* may be unequal but never irregular, unexpected and unforeseen. The first hand experience of *jhamptal* before apprehending its mathematics seems to come closer to the relevance of this metaphor. After all, the beats are unequal and so also are the turning points of human life.

One may very often see that our whole organism has been metaphorized as *veena*. Our nervous system is like the strings producing tones and overtones, and our heartbeats and pulsations are like the rhythmic beats of music. The most passionate tactile pleasure has been identified with musical enjoyment and, therefore, has been expressed by means of musical metaphor. Let us see the following portion of the poem *Manas Sundari* of *Sonar Tori* :-

> "O my beloved, I can get into the inner mystery of yours by close embrace with you. Your heartbeats will strike the strings of my heart and produce the sound-waves of music. . . I myself shall vibrate with tunefulness". (tr.)

Similar is the metaphor in the following lines of the poem *Jyotsna* in *Chitra*—

> "Shiver my person with the memory of thy embrace. Let my heart burst into ecstatic joy and spread over the sky like a continuous tune of music". (tr.)

A person, well-versed in Tagore literature and Tagore-songs can easily correlate these metaphors with the beautiful love-song cited again :

> *"Amare karo tomara veena*
> *Laho go laho tule*
> *Uthibe baji tantriraji*
> *Mohana angule."*
> (Do make me your veena, take hold of me and let my strings resonate with your lovely fingers.) (tr.)

Why human organism alone, the whole universe, has been conceived and metaphorized as music by Tagore as in the course of his lecutre delivered at the prayer hall at Santiniketan :

> "Were we able to realize the manifestation of the whole universe through our aural sense, we would have recognized it as music. We must open up all our senses to enjoy the grand music of the universe. It is neither a poetic fancy, nor a rhetorical uttering. I am really enjoying the music of the sphere in the aura of the boundless sky and the ever-passing time". (tr.)

Tagore referred to his own song *Baje baje ramya veena* again and again, in the midst of this lecture. Actually the metaphorical imagery, cited above is attuned and correlated to this song.

Numerous significant portions of the store-house of Tagore literature and songs can be viewed, reviewed and correlated in this way. Such an aesthetic approach will enrich ourselves for a better understanding of Tagore-songs, nay, all his creative works.

Tagore was very much particular about the style of rendering his songs and thereby a style evolved which is called Tagorean. Yet, style as such cannot be a set of rigid things. After all, the art of music is very much supple as it is temporal and dynamic art. There are subtle differences among the styles of various performers of Tagore songs. The style of a single performer undergoes gradual changes throughout his or her life. The style constitutes of so many things like the mode of voice-production, weight of voice, articulation of vowels and consonants, pauses, accents, clarity of ornamentations, choice and uses of accompanying instruments are all such related things, which are very likely to differ from person to person. These differences must take place despite rigidity of set notations. An unbiased person may notice some unity among variety. Perhaps, that is the aesthetic essence of the style of singing Tagore songs.

The semantic value of Tagore songs may be confined to Bengali-knowing people only but their musical value transcends this particular language group and appeals to all. Any music loving person enjoys something special in Tagore songs. We may hope that with the spread of Bengali language, of Tagore literature and of Tagore songs, the latent intrinsic universal appeal of Tagore songs will be gradually established. Of course, much depends on sincerity of culture and inter-cultural give-and-take.

Tagore songs have no parallel in the history of Bengali songs. Moreover, we may conjecture that they have no paradigm even in the world history of lyrical songs. But the statement has to be verified in time by means of that inter-cultural acquaintance.

Regarding Tagore's own aesthetic evaluation of his songs he said that the songs of his earlier age were more or less expression of his emotive heart, but as soon as he achieved maturity, he became much more careful about the aesthetic form of his lyrico-musical creativity. Testability of this statement requires a different kind of thorough research, to be linear in character, incorporating Tagore's mental history and songs sprung from it. My present attempt was not so as I had mentioned at the outset that the present aesthetic approach would be an overview approach. □

# Glimpses into History of Hindustani Classical Music : A Socio-Cultural Perspective

*S. Kalidas*

In India we have two main traditions of Classical Music — the Hindustani (of the North) and the Carnatic (of the South) systems. This division is a comparatively later (16th century) phenomenon; both the systems otherwise share a common heritage and perhaps a common future as well. All Indian music whether of the north or the south, vocal or instrumental, is basically melodic in structure. Vocal music by chronology and by being the model for instrumental music, is considered superior of the two. The idea being that whatever an instrument can do by way of monophonic melody the voice can do better. Although we have been aware of the principle of consonance since the earliest times, Indian music never developed towards polyphony.

Any construction of history of Indian music is handicapped by the fact that it has been an oral rather than a written tradition primarily. So that the music of the old masters has been orally preserved which is subject to many vagaries. In the light of this we have to rely on indirect sources and of course on old texts which mainly discuss the grammar and describe the various forms and instruments of music without detailed notational illustrations. Thus having a look at old paintings and temple sculptures could help us to conjure up a mental picture of what music must have sounded like in the past.

Histories of all old civilisations are rooted in mythology and legends — an India is no exception. Where we differ from the rest is in the fact, that these are even today, far more a part of our lives than say the "Iliad" is to modern Greece or the Temples of "Abu Simbel" to Egypt. India has managed to keep a continuity in its culture that is somewhat unique.

This, I feel, has been possible not merely because of a rigid or dogmatic adherence to tradition, but because of the capacity of the tradition itself to absorb and assimilate newer influences without abandoning its intrinsic character. And it is in this context that we should interpret the word "Classical". It represents for us retaining its essence. The word "Classical" does not imply for us dead culture but those values which have proved enduring.

Our myths illustrate these values and the ancient texts recorded them, thus laying down the basic codes or rules to govern our life and endeavour — these were called 'the 'Shastras'. From religion to mathematics and from politics to sex — there is a shastra for every aspect. So is the science of music called 'the Sangeet Shastra'.

Now, there are many different legends as to how this 'Sangeet Shastra' came to us mortal humans. The legends are many and varied. The oldest and the most important of our Gods — Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma — are all intimately connected with these legends. Shiva, the creator and the destroyer is also a musician and dancer par excellence. He, in the form of 'Natraja' is the first 'Nata' or dancer-musician-performer. From his drum called the 'Damroo' came the primordial sound 'Nada'.

Brahma, the philosopher amongst our Gods was the source of the Vedas — the four ancient texts of Indian metaphysics. He is believed to have taught the art of music to an ancient sage 'Narad' to be passed on to humans for the purpose of praying and entertainment. His wife 'Saraswati' is the Goddess of learning.

The third is Vishnu — the protector. Vishnu in the incarnation of Krishna is the divine flautist who made the world sway by his music. His exploits with the 'Gopis' (milkmaids) are a source of inspiration for some of the most beautiful and erotic poetry and paintings. Evidence from the Vedic Period (2000—100 BC) suggests that Vedic chanting first employed three types of note combinations. The Same veda was later sung in a form called the '*Sama gana'* which employs all the seven notes of the scale.

The earliest major text on music, dance and drama available to us however is the Natya Shastra written by the sage *Bharata* around the second century BC. His six chapters deal exclusively with music. He writes in great detail about Swaras (notes), Shruti (audible mieotone), Grama, Jati, Laya, Tala, various instruments of melody and percussion, etc. and even the hypothetical merits and faults of singers and instrumentalists. He also discusses, in the context of dramaturgy, the eight basic 'Rasas' (emotions and their various shades of sentiment called bhava); Sringara (erotic), Vibhatsa (odious),. Raudra (fury), Bhaya (fear), Hasya (comic), Adbhuta (wonder) Veera (valour) and Karunya (pathos). To which Shanta (tranquil) was added later on as a ninth rasa possibly after the spread of Buddhism.

In Indian history, we refer to the period between 800 and 1800 AD as the medieval age. This is an extremely interesting and rich period to study, not only because of its proximity to modern times but also because during it Islam and Christianity got established in India. India was in fact exposed to the latter as early as AD 52 by St. Thomas a direct apostle of Christ but without much impact.

By the 11th century, the Turks and the Afghan tribesmen had made it a yearly habit to loot and plunder the rich fertile plains of Punjab and Sind at harvest time. By the end of the 12th century they had established their Empire in Delhi and had decided to settle there for good. Thus began a process of cultural synthesis between the Turkish Muslim conquerors and the essentially Hindu populace.

Musically, the important event in the 12th century was the writing of the 'Gita Govinda' by Jayadeva. Jayadeva was born in Bengal, not far from where 800 years later Tagore was to set up his World University. A fine singer, Jayadeva drew inspiration from the Radha Krishna cult and his songs are set to Ragas and Talas. They describe the loveplay of Radha and Krishna with joyous abandon and are sung even today, especially as accompaniment to the well-known dance style of Orissi.

From the 14th century onwards the process of cultural fusion between the Turko-Afghan ruling elite and the Hindu masses was advancing rapidly. The most interesting and beautiful result of this fusion was the spreading of two movements : both of them populist and against the prevalent religious establishments. Both preached Love of God for release from human miseries and used mystical notions and non-conformist lifestyles to spread their message. They influenced each other too and were typically Indian in essence. These were the Sufi and Bhakti movements. Music dominated both.

Islam brought with it its own theologians and mystics. While the clergy (theologians) called the Ulemas fraternised only with the ruling elite of Arab, Turk and Mongol rulers, the mystics struck an immediate rapport with the lay masses — peasants, artisans and workers.

The Sufis gained prominence in Persia (Iran) around the 10th century with their mystical doctrines of Union with God through Love of God. This is exactly what the Bhakti saints professed, as we shall see. Such beliefs were attached by orthodox Islam and the Sufis were dubbed as heretics. The Sufis believed that the clergy (Ulema) had deviated from the original egalitarian principles of Islam by succumbing to tempral temptations. This might have caused them to adopt secrecy, isolation from society, and a language full of esoteric symbolism. Quite often, they belonged to orders under the discipleship of a Pir or a Shaikh (the equivalent of a Hindu Guru), and were called Faqir or Dervesh. Some orders had evolved hypnotic rituals like dancing till a state of strance was achieved, and then the Dervesh would become a Shaman, — a being who could commune with God or the devil. The Sufi thus acquired magical significance. They also included amongst their orders some of the finest poets, writers, historians and musicians.

The ascetics and the recluse, who lived outside the pale of normal society was not new to India. In fact Hindu myths and legends are full of these. Therefore, the Sufi Pirs were often as easily accepted by the Hindus as were the Hindu Gurus, both being regarded as of the same mould. Even today the Sufi Pirs and their tombs are venerated by Hindus in large numbers.

A liberal philosophy and a zeal for a mystical inquiry attracted to Sufism a wide galaxy of talented men — artists, poets, doctors and chroniclers. Men such as Amir Khusrau the multi-disciplinary poet musician/statesman, Barauni the historian and Baba Farid the singer/poet, were all Sufis. Such was their eminence that much to the chagrin of the Ulema, even the kings and nobility flocked to the Sufi saints for favours and blessings.

The Sufis were among the first to recognise and use native languages like Punjabi, Multani, Sindi, and Hindavi (as they called Hindi). Similarly, the musical forms that they brought originally from Persia such as the Kawali, the Ghazal and the Sufiana Kalam soon became as much Indian as the indigenous forms like the Bhajan or the Geet.

Amir Khusrau though of Turkish ancestry, was born in India. He became a disciple of the Sufi Sadt *Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia* of Delhi. Even as a young man his many and varied talents made him popular in the courts of the Khilji Sultans of Delhi. He was a sort of a musical genius. Well versed in both the Persian and Indian systems of music, he created many novel forms and musical instruments which have today become the standards in Indian music. His interaction with the South Indian pandit Gopal Nayak (whom the Sultan brought to Delhi as a part of the booty from his Devgiri campaign) further helped in this process. Tradition credits Khusrau with the discovery of virtually all the Indo-Islamic musical forms and instruments prevalent today. Songs such as the Ghazal, Kawali, Tarana, Khamsa, etc. ragas such as Qilaf, Sazgiri, Sarparda, Suha, Yaman, Purvi and Puriya, talas such as Jhoomra, Soolphak, Firodast and Pushto, instruments such as the Sitar, Tabla and Rabab, are all attributed to him. In the absence of any authentic evidence, it is difficult to take these legends to be the whole truth, but we can fairly assume that Amir Khusrau was a mighty catalyst in the evolution of Indo-Islamic cultural forms of the 14th century.

The 15th century saw Hindu Pandits Lochana and Kallinath write their treatises — *Raga Tarangini* and *A Commentary on Sangeet Ratnakar* (of 13th century), both in Sanskrit. Lochana's *Raga Tarangini* marks an important departure in Indian musicology. Until then, all the various Ragas were grouped rather arbitrarily according to a mythical 'Raga-Ragini' theory. According to this theory as stated in the texts, as early as Sange Makaranda of 8th century, there are five or six Male Ragas, their wives, the Raginis (six to each male Raga) and an unlimited number of their offsprings called the Putra Ragas. Some texts even mentioned Ragas belonging to the neuter gender!

What Lochana did was to identify twelve 'Janaka Melas' (parent scales) and group the various Ragas under these according to the notes used in them. This was a scientific approach and an improvement on the previous method of cataloguing.

The century (the 15th) saw Muslim kings and nobility take great personal interest in classical music. One of these was the Nawab of Jaunpur (near Benaras) called Sultan Husain Sharki. Sultan Husain Sharki is regarded to be a minor Amir Khusrau and is credited with many new Ragas and innovations. The Ragas such as Jaunpuri, Husaini and Shyamkalyan and the form of singing known as the Kheyal are regarded as his contributions.

This was also the period when Hinduism was undergoing a great spiritual and material crisis. Political power in the North and central India (except for some pockets) had moved into the hands of Muslims, and inbuilt factors such as the caste systems were alienating the lower caste peasants and artisans. Conversions, both forced and voluntary, were becoming rampant. What was equally responsible for this alienation was the fact that the upper castes had monopolised the prevalent systems of knowledge and learning and to a great extent even the religion by keeping the Sanskrit language to themeselves. The situation was ripe for a revolution. Typically of India — when it did occur it manifested itself purely on the socio-cultural plane rather than the politico-economic.

The Bhakti movement as it has been called began as an extension of the earlier Vaisnavite and Shaivite cults. By medieval times the myriad Gods of the Hindu pantheon had been reduced to relatively minor positions and Shiva and Vishnu had become the two main contenders for supremacy. Interestingly, this divide reflected a millenium old ethnic polarity, Shiva being Pre-Aryan i.e. Dravidian and Vishnu, Aryan. But thanks to the shedding of casteism and adoption of the vernacular languages the Bhakti movement became over the next few centuries an important mass movement.

Initially, the movement began simply by a few Vaishnavite saints adopting local dialects to reach out to the masses. They preached love of Krishna and spread their thirst for union with him. Shri Chaitanya (1486—1533) a Bhakti saint from Bengal, for example, travelled through the country spreading Vaishnava teachings by holding devotional meetings where he sang hymns describing the love of Radha and Krishna.

Then came others like Surdas (1524—1604), Meerabai (1540—1604) and Tulsidas (1534—1623), all Vaishnavs, who dissolved their social identities by total selfabnegation in their search for unity with God. The Shaivite saints of this category were Lalla from Kashmir and Akka Mahadevi from Karnataka, both women.

There was another group of Bhakti leaders who responding to the social atmosphere perhaps, called for abandoning false values like class, caste and creed in order to devote the 'self' to the knowledge of an abstract God. These were reformers like Kabir (1440—1518), and Nanak (1469—1539). It was this group, which also borrowed many Sufi ideas and practices and philosophically arrived at a combination of elements of the Hindu Advaita, Islamic Monotheism and mystical abstraction. Their poetry has been termed as Nirguni meaning abstract or one without attributes.

Their socio-religious attitudes apart, musically and from the view of poetry, all these saints (and many others that I am not mentioning) acquired immense importance because all of them preached mainly by singing. Music, once again became the voice of enlightenment.

The Bhakti movement could only have taken place at the time it did because these were the times of the consolidation of the Mughal Empire in practically the whole of Northern and Central India. The Mughals, the most well-known of India dynasties, originally came from the Central Asian region of Samark and (now in Soviet Union) and were ethnically Mongols being the descendants of the notorious Ghengis Khan. The most important Mughal Emperor was Akbar the Great (1542—1605) who was not only responsible for stabilsing and expanding the empire but also establishing new norms in administration and religious egalitarianism. He married Hindu princess and gave responsible positions to Hindus in his court. In his middle age he proclaimed a new religion displacing Islam from his court, which was called the Din-E-Ilahi. This was a convenient mixture of Zoroastrianism, Sufism, Hindu beliefs and Christianity with the Emperor himself at the centre of both the religious and the temporal hierarchy. Although it failed to catch the imagination of the masses and remained restricted to only his own court, it was nonetheless, a trend setter in secularism and a platform for exchange of mystical and metaphysical doctrines.

In his long, prosperous and fair reign the arts of music, poetry and painting flourished. The art of Persian miniature painting which was brought to India by his father Humayun, was assimilated and imbibed with Indian themes. His biographer — the Sufi poet Abul Fazal tells us that Akbar was fond of painting and maintained a large number of painters at his royal atelier, some of whom obtained great reputations comparable to those of the best Persian painters of the day. It must be noted what Abul Fazal says that Hindu artists were quick to learn the Persian techniques and some of them were the best masters of this form.

The art of illustrating texts in the form of palm leaf manuscripts in India, is believed to be older than first century AD. Although paper came to India through Persia around 1330 AD, it was only by the beginning of the 15th century that paper manuscripts came to be commissioned by the rich Jain merchants of Western India. Soon, practically all over the North, West and Central India various schools of miniature paintings developed. Some indigenous and some derivative of the Persian style. Legends, Ballads, histories and nature, provided subject matter for illustrated manuscripts. During the Bhakti movement, texts such as Jaya Deva's *Geeta Govinda* proved to be popular with painters from the hills of Kashmir to the deserts of Rajasthan. The Hero-Heroine (Nayaka-Nayika), were as often as not Krishna-Radha symbolising the yearning of the human soul (Radha) to unite with God (Krishna). The essential difference in Indian miniature paintings between the Mughal and the Rajput styles, is, that while Mughal Art is basically realistic, Rajput paintings like Hindu literature is consistently symbolic — suffused with poetic metaphor. This can be comprehended in the context of the Hindu/Buddhist concept of Maya : as all life is an illusion — art which is an interpretation of life, has to transcend the mundane appeaance and become a symbol of deeper hidden truths. All natural manifestations, everyday human events, drives and emotions were all seen as symbolising and pointing at man's relationship with God. An elaborate theory of colour was evolved wherein colours were assigned not only to each Rasa but also to each Note of the musical scale.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the Ragas and Raginis came to be illustrated. These have been called the Raga-Mala pictures. Raga Mala means a garland of Ragas. As each Raga is associated with a particular Rasa, time of the day, season of the year,etc. it could be depicted in poetic terms by the various Nayak-Nayika situations. Through the verbal imagery of a poem the Rasa of the Raga was made more exact and the paintings in turn made this imagey visible.

Such paintings are unique in the world of art. It is only in India that the arts of painting, poetry and music come together in such an interdependent synthesis. There are many sets of Raga-Mala pictures done by different schools of artists at different periods of times that have survived.

Music also found great patronage in Akbar's day. Again characteristically, instead of importing Persian forms and musicians, he patronised Indian musicians in his court, the most famous of whom was the legendary Tansen.

Tansen was a great and a pioneer singer-composer of the classical music as it exists today. His compositions apart, legends about him too are kept alive by tradition.

Tansen, who is said to be the child of a Brahmin called Makaranda Pande, was born by the blessings of the Sufi saint Hazrat Mohammad Ghaus of Gwalior. When he showed promise in music even as a child, he was sent to Vrindavan (the Vaishnav Centre) to learn under Swami Haridas a saint-musician of the Bhakti tradition. After his training, he first found place in the court of Maharaja Ram of Rewa. But soon his fame spread to Agra and he was called to the Imperial court by Akbar. Akbar honoured Tansen greatly, included him in the elite company of the Nine Jewels of the court, and valued him as a personal friend, where Tansen first embraced Islam and later the Emperor's cult of Din-E-Ilahi. Tansen's children and their descendants have been called the 'Senis' and most musical pedigrees to this day are traced to him.

Many popular legends exist about Tansen : it is said that he could light lamps by singing the Raga Deepak and summon rain by singing Malhar. While there are no historical references to these, the legends of Tansen are extremely popular and his grave at Gwalior has become a shrine for musicians today. A major music festival is held here every year and all the top musicians participate in it with reverence.

The form of singing popularised by Tansen is called the Dhrupad form. His sons were also singers and his daughter's line gave us some of the greatest instrumentalists — Beenakars and Rababiyas. Hundreds of Tansen's compositions (Dhrupads) in praise of Hindu Gods, and Kings (Raja Ram of Rewa and Akbar) have been preserved by oral tradition and sung by vocalists even today. He is credited with discovering many new Ragas like Darbari Kanhara, Miyan ki todi, Miyan ki Malhar and Miyan ki Sarang.

Gwalior, a kingdom in Central India was ruled by the Tomer clan at this time and they had accepted Akbar's suzerainty. The Tomer king Man Singh was a great patron and connoisseur of classical music and is said to have perfected and popularised the form of Dhrupad singing. His court was a haven for many great musicians and even Tansen is supposed to have spent some time there. Raja Man Singh's wife, Mrignayani is also said to have been an accomplished singer.

Also in Central India was state of Malwa where the Indo-Afghan king Baaz Bahadur ruled till he was defeated and killed by Akbar's army. Baaz Bahadur was also a great lover of music and dance and his great love for his Hindu wife Roopmati has been an inspiration for many ballads and songs.

The next two centuries (1770—1900) saw the gradual waning of the Mughal Empire. Akbar's son and successor, Jahangir, was a connoisseur of painting although music too flourished in his court and outside. But as music grew and evolved after the Bhakti period it acquired two features that led to its relative stagnation later. The first was the change in the nature and purpose of music itself. Whereas, music was earlier addressed to and inspired by God and Bhakti, it was now largely addressed to the feudal patron and inspired by more earthy sentiments.

An interesting legend illustrates this point. Akbar pleased with Tansen's singing wondered if there was any one that could surpass him? He put his question, one day, to Tansen himself, who at once replied in the affirmative: There was, he said, his own Guru Swami Hari Das. Roused by this, the Emperor wanted to listen to the Guru. But the Swami did not sing for human audience and if he left his Ashram (hermitage) it was only to meditate in the forests. So the Emperor travelled to the temple town of Vrindavan to be present when Hari Das sang. Spellbound by what he heard, Akbar asked Tansen why his (Tansen's) music lacked the power that his Guru's had? Tansen replied, "Your Majesty, my music is addressed to your royal presence, while my Guru's to the presence of God".

The second feature (that led to decadence in music) was the adoption of the family system which with time got institutionalized in what is now called the Gharana. Tansen's offsprings became the leading family in both vocal and instrumental music and their Gharana (of which a few members survive even today) acquired the name of the Senia Gharana. Some other Gharanas got named after the courts to which they were attached like the Jaipur Gharana or the Agra Gharana.

Whereas before Tansen and for a while after his death, there were four basic schools (Banis) of singing the Dhrupad: the Dagar, Nauhar, Goharhar and Khandar-banis, the later centuries saw the rise of a set of families of musicians who were distinguished more by their inherited chronology and patronage they received in courts, than by their individual talent or their musical style. To keep the favours received from the court within the family, vested interests developed. The Ustads/Gurus not only fought shy of teaching music to outsiders but also encouraged marriages within the family. Large scale conversions to Islam for the benefit of court patronage also took place. As orthodox muslims looked down upon the practise of music and dance as profession calling it Haram, the social position of musicians was not very high. This was also caused by the association of the Ustads with courtesans. Especially in the later days, when feudal patronage declined or got corrupted, musicians had to depend on the courtesans for sustenance and solace. Nonetheless classical music and dance was jealously harboured and kept alive by these courtesans and their progeny. They also brought a near classical sophistication to the folk and popular forms of singing. Thus we have today a host of semi-classical music types like Thumri, Daadra, Ghazal, Chaiti etc.

By the 19th century, the Mughal Empire had crumbled and the British had taken over. The native princes, shorn of political and military powers, diverted their energies and resources to an almost hedonistic pursuit of music and dance. Vast amounts were spent on the harem and virtually armies of court musicians employed. Often the princes were themselves artists of no mean standing. Music and dance thrived in feudal hot-houses and were developed and sophisticated into elitist-esoteric arts. The lay masses reeling under the burden of poverty and imperialism were far from these developments (although folk and religious music remained popular).

This century brought the flowering of a unique new form of singing which was given the name of Khayal (Persian: imagination, thought, concept). There is a great deal of controversy over the exact origin of this form; some credit it to Amir Khusrau (13th century) and some to Sultan Hussain Sharqui (15th century) and some to Sadarang (18th century). My personal view is that they might all have contributed in different ways, but it developed into the magnificient form it is today in the 19th century, although the Khayal composition of Sadarang and Adarang (brother?) are sung quite commonly even today. The Khayal today is the most major form of singing in Hindustani classical music.

Compared to the 16th century form of Dhrupad which was in many ways a product of the Bhakti movement, the Khayal is more embellished and ornamental. It also allows a greater degree of freedom to improvise on the theme, retaining the elements of the Raga and Tala.

By the middle of the 19th century most musicians had taken to singing Khayal although it was considered important to know and to be able to sing, Dhrupad as well. Even today singers and instrumentalists belonging to old traditional schools or families take pride in having some Dhrupad compositions in their repertiore. Many Dhrupad componsitions were simply recast to be sung in the Khayal style.The earlier families who took to Khayal singing were those of Delhi, Gwalior, Agra and Atrauli.

It is believed that Bade Mohammad Khan perfected the modern Khayal singing by incorporating the taan element of the punjabi tappa—a folk form originally attributed to the camel drivers of the North-West. So impressive was this new style that it soon became greatly popular. The lineage of Bade Mohammad Khan divided into two main streams which became the Gwalior and Jaipur Gharanas. In one way or other, virtually, most other Khayal Gharanas were influenced by these two.

were influenced by these two.

Gwalior, the cradle of the Dhrupad, now once again showed the lead by inviting Mohammad Khan to the court. The Maratha ruling family of Scindias cherished music and made the Ustad (Master) teach two young proteges of the ruler — Haddu and Hassu Khan in the early 1800's. Both the brothers were immensely talented and are said to have been able to reproduce the master's music by just once listening to it. That was far from what Bade Mohd. Khan would have desired, and he left Gwalior within two years for the court of Rewa, and from there to Jaipur where he stayed until his death. His son Bade Mubarak Ali became one of the greatest singers of his time and was attached to the court of Jaipur. He was venerated as second only to his father and even the proud prodigies of Gwalior, Haddu and Hassu Khan, held him in great esteem.

This was also the time when western education was spreading throughout the country and Indian society was undergoing yet another period of metamorphosis. Railways, electricity, gramophone, the film and the radio had set the trail of a revolutionary change.

The British, however, were almost blissfully deaf to Indian music and paid little attention to it. The exceptions to this rule were Fox Strangways and Clements whose amateurish forays into Indian ethno-musicology fortunately did less harm than it could have.

The real pioneer of Modern Indian Musicology was Pt. Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande—a Bombay lawyer who gave up his practice of law to work in the field of music. Born to middle-class parents on August 10, 1860, V.N. Bhatkhande learnt music from ordinary teachers in the beginning but later on travelled to virtually every centre of music in the country to meet and learn from the masters. Never much of a performer as such, he was the first in modern times to classify, analyse and grammatize Indian music in a systematic manner. He was funded and assisted in this gigantic task by the Princes of Baroda and Gwalior. In 1916, Bhatkhande organised the first public concert-cum-conference of Indian Classical Musicians at Baroda, to which most of the leading musicians were invited. From then till 1925 he organised five more such events, where he collected the top singers and instrumentalists to discuss and analyse matters relating to music. Bhatkhande also devised the first and till date the only functional system of musical notation for our music and notated thousands of songs and compositions. He wrote voluminously in Sanskrit, Marathi and English and started the first three music colleges in Baroda, Gwalior and Lucknow. All three are still running though none of them have been able to produce any significant performing musicians. This was the first attempt at re-institutionalising the teaching of classical music. There has been a lot of criticism of his work—some of it quite justified yet it should be noted that in a time when obscurantism and obdurate orthodoxy were the order of the day, Bhatkhande took up the task of saving music and bringing to it a much needed rationality and introspection.

Another person, who at about the same time, took up the crusade for freeing classical music from the claustrophobic confines of feudal patronage and relating it to people at large was Pt. Vishnu Digambar Paluskar. Hailing from the native state of Kurundwad in Southern Maharashtra, Vishnu Paluskar, the son of Keertankar (practitioner of a form of religious discourse where legends and myths are set to music and preached) was born on August 18, 1872. Born in an atmoshphere of Bhakti and music young Vishnu was seen accompanying his father from a very young age.

An accident involving fireworks made the boy blind while still in school, and so it was resolved by the intervention of the local ruler of the State of Miraj, that young Vishnu should Pursue a career in serious classical music. He was put under the tutelage of the great master Pt. Balakrishna Bua Ichalkaranjikar, who had learnt Khayal singing from the Gwalior Gharana of Haddu-Hassu Khan. Vishnu Paluskar learnt under this Guru for some years, but around the year 1896 his relationship with Balakrishna Bua began to get strained. The reasons for this were perhaps inherent in the rigours of the relationship itself. The Guru-Shishya (Master-disciple) relationship often imposes a strenuous burden on the apprentice who is expected to serve his master with blind dedication even though there are no set hours of teaching or learning and everything depends on the Guru's whim. Paluskar's case was especially complicated because he was the protege of the ruler of the State where his Guru was employed as court-musician. Anyway, he left Miraj, collecting a small group of his own followers, settled for a while at Baroda. But soon Paluskar's mind was fomenting against the many feudal rituals and practices which had come to regulate a musician's life. He realised (as did Bhatkhande) that if classical music remained shackled from the people and shunned by the newly emerging westernized middle class, it would surely die of decadence. Wanting to free classical music from feudal patronage he was perhaps the first to organise his own concert for public and charge a fee for it! Of course, at that time this was considered a scandalous thing to do.

He capped this departure from custom by singing from a raised platform while making his audience sit below on the (carpeted) floor—a redefining of the status of the musician vis-a-vis his listeners. Braving heavy odds, ostracised by both fellow musicians (including Guru Balakrishna Bua) and princely patrons alike—Paluskar with great foresight joined forces with the nationalist Congress movement. In this he was heralding new democratic values into our music world. He toured all over the country singing at all Congress sessions and founded his school for music at Lahore (Punjab) on May 5, 1901, naming it the Gandharva Maha Vidyalaya. This institution has grown into a gigantic all-India organisation now thanks to the dedicated nurturing of it by Paluskar and his pupils. Among his very many disciples, the names of Omkar Nath Thakur, Vinayak Rao Patwardhan and his son Dattatreya Vishnu Paluskar must be mentioned. Always deeply religious, towards the end of his life, Paluskar became a sort of a musical saint and gave up singing classical music, singing mainly Bhajans and devotional music.

While Bhatkhande and Paluskar campaigned for and won a popular appreciation of classical music, the traditional families practising the art—the various gharanas as they were called—were caught unawares by the change that was taking place in the society. Thus when the princely states were dissolved into a democratic India in August 1947, the ones to suffer the most were these families of court musicians and courtesans. After a few decades of social displacement, however, most of them have adapted to modernity. Concert halls, Radio, TV, the gramophone recordings etc. have opened up new avenues of livelihood. Even so, many musicians still repent for the past, when the patrons were connoisseurs—who, even if fewer in number cared for excellence and quality. Whereas today, they perform for larger but generally ignorant audiences.

However, classical music in an independent and democratic India, I am happy to say, is again flourishing. The best concert musicians command high respect and get quite high fees. There are scholarships and various other facilities to study music for those with talent and interest who want to make a career out of it. Although a lot more could be desired for bettering the conditions and standards for the development of a new generation of artists, it cannot be overlooked that resources pose a constraint in a relatively poor country as ours.

Thanks to artists such as Pt. Ravi Shankar and the vigorous youth movement in Europe and America, Indian Music now attracts many listeners outside India too. And many of these, luckily, are highly informed and also practising musicians. So a lot of interaction is taking place and a greater mutual awareness is arising between different cultural traditions. Though, musically speaking, I would hesitate to comment on the experimental mixing of Indian and western music we perhaps have to wait a little longer to be able to arrive at newer forms of Art-music expression which is not only musically viable but also aesthetically cogent. □

# Three Jnanpith Award Winners

*Jehanara Wasi*

Pannalal Patel, eminent Gujarati writer, has recently won the prestigious Jnanpith Award. Among the other recipients of this literary honour, are Gujarat's leading poet Umashankar Joshi and Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai, a distinguished writer in Malayalam.

Pannalal Patel's celebrated novel *Malela Jeev* (1941) represents a new, more authentic protrayal of rural characters and society in Gujarati literature. Vivid and realistic, it poignantly evokes life in rural Gujarat. *Manavini Bhavai* (The Tragic Farce of Human Life), published in 1947, owes its distinctiveness partly to its use of rural and regional settings with folk tales, festivals, rituals, songs and language, and partly to its captivating narrative. The novel highlights not only the geographically specific locale of north-west Gujarat, but the historically specific era of the famine that occurred in 1900 all over India.

In order to turn a simple romantic love story into a serious work about the human condition, Pannalal Patel juxtaposes his personal sufferings against the suffering of the entire community. The new quintessential perspective makes *Manavini Bhavai* superior to Patel's earlier writing. Separated lovers and their consequent misery is a recurrent theme in his novels. *Valamana*, a long short story has been dramatised and his one-act plays have a distinctive flavour. When Patel uses a Puranic theme, he applies what is relevant in ancient Indian culture to a modern situation.

Umashankar Joshi, veteran Gujarati poet, litterateur, Jnanpith Award winner and Fellow of the Sahitya Akademi is Pannalal Patel's contemporary and friend. Discussing his own poetry and the works of other writers, Umashankar Joshi in an interview observes: "I started scribbling verses at fourteen, burning with a desire to write poetry. It was when I was seventeen that I wrote my first finished piece, a sonnet which I think will be a must even in a limited selection of my work. It is entitled *The Sharad Full-Moon on the Nakhi Lake.* In 1931 I came out with a long poem about five

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hundred lines called nothing short of *Visva Shanti.* It was published by Gandhiji's Navajivan Press which rarely published poetry. My attempt was to touch the deeper significance of the movement with reference to mankind's quest and struggle for harmonious living. It said, for example, if the French Revolution emphasised Liberty, the Russian Revolution Equality, the resurgence in India should aim at focussing on Fraternity. My acquaintance with the Russian Revolution started from 1929. We studied Marxist books also. In jail in 1932 I wrote a poem with a definite Marxian bias, *Jatharagni* (The Stomach-Fire—Fires of Hunger) which ends on a prophetic note : (The stomach-fire of the hungry will rise; not a speck of the ashes of ruined palaces will be found)".

According to Umashankar Joshi, "Modern writing in Gujarati shows almost the same pattern as seen in other Indian languages. In the Post-independence period the regional novel thrived for some time. Gujarati threw up its greatest living novelist Pannalal Patel in the forties and fifties when in Hindi appeared the late Phanishwar Nath Renu. Then followed the crisp hesitating short novel, dealing with existential anguish. The theatre of the absurd found popularity with small groups of actors. The new short story held its own as did the surrealistic and other experimental poetry. The *gazal* has, however continued to remain in vogue."

Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai, well-known for his writing in Malayalam, and a recipient of the Sahitya Akademi and Jnanpith Awards, is widely translated. *The Iron Rod* is the moving story of a man committed to certain values and ideals. The novel portrays violence and passion with remarkable insight. These emotions are skilfully interwoven. Loneliness, suffering and an unfulfilled life are depicted with artistry. Disturbing situations drive the protagonist on to kill a man cold-bloodedly with an iron rod. The murderer is the victim of his own lust and passions. Compelling and dramatic, this is a memorable piece of writing.

*Chemmeen*, an internationally acclaimed novel, is described by some critics as romantic and mythical. Thakazhi explains that the myth of Kadalamma (sea goddess) still prevails among fishermen in Kerala. The fisherman Palani is an orphan and thinks that Kadalamma is his mother. Palani does not know his parents and has great confidence in the goddess, his universal mother. This theme has been artistically developed. Another character, Chembankunju, wants to have his own boat and net and works for them. These fishermen represent two types of thinking on the sea coast.

Unless reality is identified and described against that background, the life of fisherfolk can never be understood.

Thanks to reasonably good English translations we have access to the works of Pannalal Patel, Umashankar Joshi, Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai and others. Besides being well established in India, these writers now have a world readership. □

# Indian Performing Arts : An Overview

*Utpal K. Banerjee*

The earth spacecraft VOYAGER II carrying music from India—among 55 other countries—today hurtles into wide open space after only now having gone past the planets Venus and Uranus and aims at far distant realms. One can safely conjecture that this music would have recognisable elements dating back to the early pre-history when the Vidic psalms were not recited but sung and the three Indian musical notes of Sadja, Madhyam and Pancham were believed to be Swayambhu or self-generated. The continuity of Indian music, taking millenia easily into its strides, is truly mind-boggling.

Performing arts in India encompass such durable and robust genres as not merely music but also dance, drama and — to add the latest variation on the theme — film. They are outcome of creative urges of man covering his full entity: man the lover *(homo eroticus)*, man the player *(homo ludens)* and man the builder *(homo faber)*. Attainment of excellence in the art of loving, playing and building covers indeed all sculpture, dance, drama and demagogy. For performing arts collectively, introvert creativity gets commingled with extrovert communion, — to satisfy the overall needs of society: to entertain (for relaxation), to involve (for participation) and, often enough, to educate (for moral or didactic elevation).

Out of many combinatarial possibilities, performing arts do encompass theme (for content), treatment (for presentation) and technique (for devices and technologies used). Variation, of course, can be wide in terms of quality as well as quantity.

We propose to look for its societal background, role of technology, manifestation in the First and Second Worlds, and then trace its need and availability in the Indian villages, towns and metropolitan areas. A few hypotheses are formulated with regard to the genesis and growth of performing arts, the societal organisation that affect these arts in India, and matching of their variety in terms of demand and supply. Projections are then made to see their role in the coming future.

The social environment has perhaps a crucial role to play in providing the background for different kinds and qualities of performing arts.

Very broadly (and overlappingly) speaking, the *Primary* societies are village-based and centred round agriculture, fisheries and extraction, where man "plays for and against nature". Need of sheer physical power is very high and technology usage is at a low key (except for highly mechanised farming). Social institutions are based on joint families with deep attachments among different members, with often three generations living together with little mobility (pre-figurative). Religion has a very significant role providing a cohesive force, with strong intra-community, intra-denominational ties.

The *secondary* societies are town-based with industry and construction activities, where man "plays for and against material". Need of mechanical power is high and technology usage is medium to high. Social institutions have moved towards nuclear families with somewhat less attachment and more mobility among members of the communities, and with usually two generations living together (co-figurative). Religion plays a less significant role and is often divisive.

The *tertiary* societies are suburban-based and are concerned with service activities (like transportation, banking, insurance for the first two societies), where man "plays for and against organisation". Need of information power is high and technology usage is high. The trend is definitely towards nuclear families with high mobility. Role of religion is of still less significance.

The *quarternary* societies are hardly fixed in geographical habitats and with a high concentration of leisure activities, such as, plastic arts, graphic arts, performing arts, sports like sailing and surf-riding, politicial debates and discussions, seminars and conferences, and so on, where man "plays for and against himself". Social institutions are based on a high degree of mobility, and even nuclear families move towards unitary members and single generations, with weak family bonds (post-figurative). Role of religion is hardly perceived, save in an esoteric sense.

Two points must be mentioned here. Apart from the spatial and temporal coexistence of the above forms of societies being perfectly possible, the description here does not concern itself with the relationship between capital and the means of production, and leaves the question of their economic ownership out of consideration. Further, the socio-cultural description does not attempt to cover political institutions and the role of state.

The first hypothesis of this study is that as primary societies tend to move to or overlap with secondary, tertiary and quarternary societies, usage of more quantitative and qualitative technologies make for a liberation of creative energies. As preoccupation with nature and material decreases, involvement with information and intellect increases correspondingly. In fact, tempo of technological development plays a progressively increasing role in the quantum and scope of all art in general, and the three elements of *theme, treatment* and *technique* of performing arts in particular.

Thematically, all performing arts began with religious bases. Early music, dance and drama in all countries centered round themes relating to divinity and the role of man vis-a-vis his gods and mother Nature. Whatever was known of heavenly goings on and their impact on earthly being were faithfully replicated in the performing arts. The thematic variety increased slowly with the more recent knowledge of man related to himself, his immediate family, his clan and community, and eventually the wide open world, — along with scope of abstraction and cerebralisation.

Treatment-wise, early performing arts copied faithfully nature and the immediate surroundings. The rules of presentation were well-delineated and well-understood, and did not make for undue variations. Thus, the Greek drama followed its tenets from the growth to catharisis, and so did Bharata's Natya Sastra is Nritya, Nratta and Natya, and both artistes and audience created and appreciated the art-form within these confines. Whether it was eagle dance of Hopi Indians from Colorado valley or Kabuki plays of Japan or Chou dance-drama of Bihar's Seraikela, — the imitation of nature and the well-laid grammar were both conspicuous. Treatment tended to get more varied with the onset of proscenium acting, with simplicity yielding place to complex variety and abstraction. Musical geniuses brought forth their own style, and so did playwrights and choreographers. Experimentation and variations became less exceptions than rules in all fields of performing arts. The quantitative measure of forms and methods of presentation became simply enormous.

Technically, early performing arts had to necessarily confine themselves to simple devices. Thus, one observes very few props and artefacts used by rural musicians or allowed by their dance-teacher or drama-director counterparts. Stage, light and decor were later boosted by new technologies, almost to the point of non-recognition by early practitioners.

Film, as a performing art, made a late beginning in the end of nineteenth century with Lumiere brothers concentrating on simple shots of their immediate surroundings. But, theme, treatment and technique-wise, it underwent a sea-change even faster than other art-forms. In fact, it very soon became almost an amalgam of all other plastic and graphic arts, and imbibed the whole range of audio-visual performing arts, — with a bewildering gamut of themes and treatment. The most notable development was in technique, as the earliest three-in-one contraptions (camera-cum-developer-cum-projector) went into oblivion with the sound-track, zoon-camera, trick-photography and computerised special-effects technology of "Jaws", "The Deep", "Star Wars" and "2001 : A Space Odyssey".

The above description, it should be noted, highlights only the increasing quantity and scope of performing arts with the asset of technological progress and the consequent changes in social institutions, and refrains deliberately from passing comments on their quality-content or impact on the society's value-system. This phenomenologically evaluative approach will be used for predictive purposes as well, without necessarily passing value-judgements in the process.

Following from the above hypothesis, the transition from the early variety of performing arts to their more contemporary forms appears to reveal a conscious attempt to be cerebralised along the way. This perhaps is inevitable as preoccupation with nature and material technologies had to be replaced by information technologies and intellectual activities in the development of social institutions, thereby increasing the involvement of a repidly inventing mind of *Homo Faber*.

The first characteristic of the above is an intentional moving away from the mimetic art-forms into more and more abstractions. Just as portraiture painting became obsolete with still camera (which could do the imitation much better) and went into impressionism, surrealism, cubism and geometricism, among other abstract forms, — so did dance and music, drama and films, passing from their earlier imitative forms into the dazzling abstract worlds of Franz Kolan and Pilobolus groups in dance of John Cage and Karlhinz Stockhaussen music of Samuel Becket and Eugene Ionesco in drama of Godard and Fassbinder in film.

The second characteristic is a deliberate introduction of breaks and pauses in an otherwise smooth flow of the performance, so as to give an intellectual jolt, as it were. The Absurd Drama and drama of the cruelty are known for this, as are electronic music, much of the experimental ballet and the whole genre of abstractionist films of Francois Truffeant, Ingmar Bergman, Andre Wajda and Mrinal Sen.

The third and final characteristic is a well-designed interruption of emotional involvement of the audience with the art and the artistes, through intellectual detachment in the form of alienation and analysis. What Brecht did in German drama has become a universal hall-mark of all performing arts including films of Alain Renais, parts of new Jazz, "Field Figures" and similar other productions by Royal Ballet, "Notre Faust" opera and plays of Harold Pinter and Edward Albeo.

Perhaps what is very true about the First-World performing arts scene is a little less so in the Second World, whatever be the reasons for it. This applies mainly to themes and treatments and not at all to techniques. Music is mercifully very rich in Poland, but not so much in Hungary despite Kodaju and Bartoc whose themes go back to the golden days of the past or relate to the mythical figures as do poems by Ferenz Juhas. Dance is excellent in Soviet Union and unsurpassed technically in Bolshi Theatre and their preparatory company Moscow Classical Ensemble, but both themes and treatment show little sign of moving with the time. Drama, after Chekov and Gorkey, has not thrown up world-class playwrights and only films show some vitality but not the wizardry of Sergei Eisenstein. As in painting, poetry and fiction, so in performing arts, how much of it is due to arts, and relentless striving for socialist realism is a moot point and not within the scope of this study.

Villages and townships in India have coexisted for long and pre-date — like Greece — the advent of industrial society. Royal courts formed the top echelon of a society marked by a smooth give and take of artistic kind at all levels right upto the rural and tribal belts. Patronage of the mobility was widely sought and graciously given to the signing birds, wandering ministers, vaudeville actors and trained dancers. These artistes, in turn, brought the royal messages to the townships and villages. And a visit — and reward scheme operated down the line right upto the rural and tribal folks, — although, how the intervening grey area of socio-geographical separation was bridged remains a mystery, but bridged it was. Such contacts extended spatially too, to other areas with similar socio-cultural strata. The entertainment, participation and education process of the performing arts went through the full cycle of each area and longitudinally among different areas. Different strata comprised not merely farmers, but also artisans of cottage industry and traders of a rudimentary service society. Social stratification was actually separatist but merged almost visibly in the evenings and in the non-harvest leisure, to give full vent to the creative urges.

One perceives some difference in the above structure of social organisation and communication from the non-intergrated forms of primary to quantennary society over a span of time and space between India and the West. It is to be expected that the Indian kind would have a more balanced life-view than the Western kind and would face current reality more stoically as a continuity from the past, rather than a separation as per the alarmist Western view.

The second hypothesis of this study is that owing to the existence of a balanced world-vision in the pre-industrial rural-urban matrix of India, the societal needs for entertainment, mass involvement and educational upliftment were met fully by the themes, treatment and technique of the performing arts. The ensuring cultural balance was thus a result of matching the variety of performing arts made available for it. The following is a State-wise sample list of the latter variety of traditional type :-

(1) Krishnattam — Kerala;
(2) Poothan Kali — Kerala;
(3) Marionettes — Tamilnadu, Orissa, Rajasthan;
(4) Ram Lila (with mask) — Varanasi;
(5) Dashavatar — Goa;
(6) Jatra — Manipur, West Bengal, Orissa;
(7) Veedhi Natakam — Andhra Pradesh;
(8) Nautanki — Uttar Pradesh;
(9) Yakshagan — Karnataka;
(10) Rasleela — Uttar Pradesh;
(11) Leather puppet — Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Kerala, Karnataka;
(12) Purulia chau (with mask) — West Bengal;
(13) Teyvam — Kerala;
(14) Seraikela Chau (with mask) — Bihar;
(15) Bhagavat Mela — Tamilnadu;
(16) Boota Dance — Mysore;
(17) Bayalata — Hysore;
(18) Koodiattam — Kerala;

(19) Kathakali — Kerala;
(20) Mohiniattam — Kerala;
(21) Naacha — Madhya Pradesh;
(22) Tamasha — Maharashtra;
(23) Bhavai — Gujarat;
(24) Nagal — Uttar Pradesh;
(25) Ankia Nat — Assam;
(26) Manipuri dance — Manipur; and
(27) Teru Koothu — Tamilnadu.

The above variety-matching, it should be noted, evinced the following facets :-

The cultural equilibrium was not static in nature, but continued over time, since possibilities of multiple meanings and multiple moments could be tackled. For instance, a Bhavai troop of 500 could easily take on mythological, family planning and indebtedness themes, — as though taking on new layers of time;

Mythology as well as actuality were built in all formats, as evident in Jatra which could take on Puranic, historical, current political or social theme and carry out presentation with the same group of artistes;

Contemoraneity and immediacy could be imported in a trice. For instance, Punjabi, Harianvi and Himachali folk music and dances could incorporate relevant themes to the China and Pakistan conflicts with such lyrics as "O Plant, bend a little so that my fighter-hero (earlier version : lover) can cross over you";

As social and psychic indentification was complete in these art forms, a performance of Tamasha could take countryside village, newly grown township or sophisticated metropolis in its strides and literally by storm.

The pre-industrial rural and urban belts of India, with their balanced world-vision and consequently homeostatic art-forms (in a total and dynamic sense), underwent an alteration process in the occupationally specialised social institutions were faced with a new legal system, an administration steel-frame borrowed from the West and a slow emergence of middle class as a product of the revenue laws of the British, new mercantile activities and creation of learned professions.

The ensuing changes saw the changed villages as socially inegalitarian, apart from being economically poor. Accountable administration was severely limited, with perception of government usually distorted. Human needs of physiological and security kinds continued to belong to agricultural and artisan class.

The new *townships* grew with poor to lower middle income groups and were socially semi-egalitarian. Accountable administration existed in penny-packets and perception of government was somewhat coloured. Human needs were less physiological or security kind, but more of social and ego kinds, A new middle class emerged from mainly artisan, commercial and industrial roots, with some educated middle class from administrative and professional groups.

The *metropolises* were a brand new phenomenon, originating from the factories of the East India Company. They were heterogenous with poor to upper income groups but had a perceptible amount of social egalitarianism. Accountable administration was evident, with consequently unconfused perception of government. Human needs were mainly of social, ego and self-fulfilment kinds. The new middle class encompassed the whole range of artisan, commercial, industrial, educational and professional, — mainly due to educational, judicial and administrative development rather than industrial progress.

The assemblage of heterogenous mass, which spearheaded the urban and metropolitan middle classes, also gave rise in those geographical conurbations a common cultural focus and behaviour pattern distinct from the traditional rural-urban society. Along with the new-found social mobility, intellectual freedom and liberal values, came an avalanche of new art-forms complete with new or borrowed themes, treatments and techniques. Some illustrations are offered in the succeeding paragraphs :

Contemporary drama has been characterised by the following features :-

Themes have acquired a variety ranging from mythological and historical to social, political and psychological, with often a mix;

Presentation styles vary from allegorical and symbolic to natural and environmental;

Techniques range from large proscenium stage and elaborate decor to intimate theatre and theatre in the round;

Free-ranging intellect and a few-liberal values play a major role in all aspects : theme, treatment and technique. On the contrary, social mobility is not particularly visible.

Drama is among the most Western-influenced performing arts which came, sooner or later, in all Indian language-groups.

For instance, the contemporary Marathi theatre is at the confluence of three distinct streams: Operatic from, Tamasha form and the Western socio-psychological from. Operatic form gained from the contributions of Uday Gorwale, B Deshpande, Bhargava, Jaimala and others, while Tamasha form got a new lease of life from P L Deshpande, Dada Kondake and Dadu Indurikar, and the Western form was enriched by Vasant Kanetkar, Jivay Tendulkar, Ratnakar Matkari, Purusottam Darvekar, C T Khanelkar, Mahesh Elkunchwar, Satish Alekar, G P Deshpande, Achyut Vaze and Vrindaban Dandawate. Bengali theatre made an early start, with historical and social themes, and using blank verse and operatic forms. The turning point in political and purposive plays, given by Bijan Bhattacharjee, has been forcefully carried forward by Utpal Dutta, Badal Sirkar, Manoj Mitra, Mohit Chattopadhyay and others. Hindi theatre joined rather late in the mainstream with Udayshankar Bhatt and Upendranath "Ashk" and has continued with Vishnu Prabhakar, Lakshminarayan Lal, Vinod Rastogi, Mohan Rakesh, Lakshmikant Verma, Dharamvir Bharati and Surendra Verma. In Oriya drama, Manoranjan Das, Bijay Misra, Biswajit Das, Rameshchandra Panigrahi, Jagannath Prasad Das, Kartikchandra, Rath and others have been delving into themes and treatments reminiscent of existentialist writings of Kirkegard, futile efforts of Kamus' Sicyphus, enormous vacuity of Ionesco, the burns of Eliot's Waste Land, the endless waiting of Becket's Godet and the socially meaningful alienation of Brecht. Although Telugu drama began with Yakshagana and Veedhi Natakam, it too has achieved political sharpness and psychological depth with Ganesh Patro, Nokaraju Nandi, S Kashi Visvanath, T Seshachalapathi, Gollapudi Maruthi Rao and Y Virendranath.

The following features can be discerned in contemporary music which include those of Carnatic and Hindusthani music very freely available in the contemporary scene :-

Themes are heavily traditional having a strong religious accent, with the only other variation being of maudlin or pure sentimental kind;

Treatment-wise, both Carnatic and Hindusthani music attempt a preservation of styles set over years, with modes often falling into well-delineated schools of expression. The other contemporary variety has a free borrowing from Western roots. There are some brave exceptions tending to create a new music, particularly in Bengal, Maharashtra and Gujarat;

Techniques have shown a remarkable progress availing of a large variety of musical instruments (often resurrected from the past and improved upon) and aided by Western audio-visual devices.

Social mobility of musicians, irrespective of caste and creed has helped to break earlier esoterism but has not been marked by much intellectual freedom or liberal values.

Carnatic music has continued to thrive pretty unadulterated over many ages, thanks to an insulation from foreign invasion. It is precisely the latter reason which made Hindusthani music get both inspirations and instruments from the periodic visitors, such as, Sitar from Amir Khurso. Both the southern and northern traditional music have remained steeped in religious themes with a large number of Kritis from the southern saint-poets like Thyagaraj and Dixitar, with the northern Dhrupad, as precursor of Khayal, going back to the Mughal times of Tansen and his disciples Adarang and Sadarang. Classical Ragas form the backbone of the entire musical schemata : with well-accepted ascending and descending sequences of pure and impure notes and their srutis, and with a graded characteristic in their articulation. some modern meastoos have improvised new Ragas in both northern and southern styles. Violin from the West was taken to heart in the Carnatic form, with Veena — Rudra and Saraswati — undergoing addition of strings. The latter was also the feature in the Hindusthani Santoor and even guitar. Audio aids to music have been freely used and now even visual aids, along with the Western orchestration pits. The other music, mainly of urban creation with many forms and themes, has remained largely of undefined texture : more a mix than a synthesis. Film-based music has a firm grip on the vast population, boasting of no particular style and to the benefit of only amorous lyrics. Functional music — for film documentaries, radio-fillers and ad-films — has shown some surprising range and depth, and such original gems as Bailadila Symphony by Vanraj Bhatia remain only rarities. In contemporary dance the following discernible features are simular to the musical phenomena :—

Themes are again dominantly traditional or purely sentimental, and brook of few variations;

Treatment permits mainly classical and pure styles, with the other dance-forms being of a rootless variety. There are, of course, a few exceptions of experimental kind;

Techniques are of dazzlingly Western origin, with all the latter's audio-visual contraptions;
Social mobility has brought dancers to the common public at urban and metropolitan forums, but without much display of intellectual freedom on liberal values.

The classical themes of dance hark back to the two major epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata along with the Krishna legends, but not much besides. Stylistically, Kathakali from Kerala continues to be based on the good and the evil depictions through facial decorations. Kathak mainly from Jaipur and Lucknow, with a variation from Varanasi, has kept aloft its repertoire of tatkars, chakradhars, todas, and tukras from the last century. Bharatanatyam was consolidated in its elegant artistic form and fairly firm sequence only in the thirties when respectability was lent to Dasiattam, following the Devadasi bill in Madras of the twenties. Kuchipudi dates back to the Bhagavatars of Kuchipudi village in Andhra Pradesh and Odissi to the statuesque temple-dancers of Orissa. Manipuri dance, with its dominant Krishna themes and Pasya Style, came to the contemporary scene through Nava Kumar Singha of Santiniketan with Tagore's encouragement. They all use classical music, with Padam for Bharatanatyam serving the same role as Thumri or Kathak. Chau from Purulia, Mayurbhanj and Seraikela uses almost classical discipline, with drishtibhed being replaced (due to mask) by shiva-bhed and greeba-bhed. Modern stagecraft and lighting devices are certainly not abhorred by the classical exponents. Other dance-forms try to imbibe Western balletic notions or just abstract Symbols, and are yet to mature into a distinctive style either way. Notable exceptions are Man and Machine by Uday Shankar and a few experimental attempts by Sachin Sankar, but the contemporary scenes and sensibilities have remained by and large outside the available India choreography.

Of most recent genesis, this genre of contemporary film has reached early maturity into commercial and artistic forms, evincing the following features :-

Themes follow near-rigid formulae in social situations for commericial films, while social and phychological variants have been tackled in artistic films;
Treatment-wise, simple styles and instantly understood imageries are followed in commercial films, with a happy blend of directorial styles and presentations attempted in artistic films;

Technically, lavish colour film and sophisticated camera-work, with wide-screen and stereophonic variations, had become common in commercial film, whereas a limited range of technical excellence, with mainly innovative camera and music, has been the bed-rock of artistic films;

Social mobility has played an important role in availability for commercial films, while intellectual freedom and liberal values have been quite in evidence in artistic films.

Films, emanating from Himancsu Roy of Bombay Talkies and Pramathesh Barua of Calcutta New Theatres in the thirties, soon became a fact of life. The output of Tamil and Telugu films, added to Hindi and other regional language films has catapulated the Indian film industry among the world's first three. Hindi films constitute a considerable integrating force among its millions of multi-lingual spectators, with their own brand of music and dance numbers rated the most popular items even for the mass media of radio and television. In fact, the radio's bread-earner is its commercial channel, pouring out only film songs, and the Indian television's most staple audience is that for the two week-end commercial films telecast throughout the country. Story-lines of the films follow a consistent boy-meet-girl-meet-villain-rescue-girl-live-happily pattern' with punch added by long-separated twins, ever-sacrificing womanhood, always-winning heroes and their first-wayward-later-chastened sidekicks which — put in the right combination — hold enraptured the village, town and metropolitan public alike. The commercial films present a down-to-earth style and employ usually high-class technical values. Even among commercial films, good themes, attention to details and competent techniques have brought kudos to some directorial ventures which are still departures from the routine. The artistic films on the other hand, leave the box-office unfilled, although leaving such durables as Pather Panchali and its trail blazing successors, created by the loving efforts of Satyajit Ray, Mrinal Sen, Girish Karnad, B V Karanth, Muzaffar Ali, Shyam Benegal, Basu Bhattacharya, Adoor Gopalkrishnan, M S Sathyu, and a handful others. Their range of theme is wide and varied seeking generally authentic social values, and their treatment reveals awareness of all the available trends: *cinema verite* to social documentation, utter naturalness to abstract symbolism. They pay a deal of attention to creative use of camera, light, sound and montages — trying for total effects — which generally pay good dividends for the knowledgeable but limited audience.

The third hypothesis of this study is that the new towns and metropolises in India, along with their class-structure, carry with them an external remification of industrial society and after-events, but basically their inhabitants carry forward the social and psychological symptoms of the traditional society. This is a phenomenon which had perhaps many compelling historical reasons behind it including the following among others :-

> The class-structure in the West emerged clearly as a product of economic and technological change. In India, the sequential growth had its origin in the legal system and administration, and the middle classes mainly belonged to the learned professions. In fact, the educated middle class who received higher education in English and got engaged in multiple pursuits was a distinctive outgrowth of Western administration and a capitalist economy;
>
> The emergence of industrial middle class was a slow process as there was hardly a conducive environment with a timely growth of the economy, due to the dearth of capital as well as the missing technical strata (except for the primordial artisan middle class) in the Society;
>
> The new employment opportunities did not mean that the opportunity to work would be available to the great majority of adults in the society and that, through wages and other allocative devices, the product of the economy would be widely distributed among urban and metropolitan families;
>
> Above all, the distribution of intelligence and ability in the society was extremely uneven due to an inconsistency in the quality of human resources through an uneven spread of basic and higher education.

Whatever the reasons, the outcrop of today's metropolitan culture in India is hardly a modern one, except a little manifest in Bombay and quite masked in Delhi and Calcutta. Towns carry forward communities and classes still bearing the traditional moulds of customs and behaviour, and clinging to the same patterns. What is most outstanding feature in Indian city culture today is perhaps what has been most outstanding in her rural culture. In more senses than one, urban India is only outwardly seen but, in reality, is only a hinterland inhabited by the transplanted rural people without the benefit of a gradual growth into the urban fabric.

In the realm of performing arts the above lagged growth-pattern has led to the following features :-

Formal elements of Western performing arts trends have no corroborative internal need for India. The Indian urbanites with roots in the rural society, would have a very limited and knee-deep identification with the Western arts movements;

Continuity and flow have been the main-stay of all Indian traditional performing arts which could contain many different movements, depicting cyclic time-changes and consecrated or non-consecrated spatial phenomena, due mainly to their non-rigid formats. Western arts forms, as off-shots of a cerebral culture-syndrome, can only become appendages here, likely to be rejected;

Abstraction and adoptation of new symbols were never dis-associated from life-function and life vision in India, which enabled its traditional performing arts to face new reality without snapping ties with the past. The inspirations from the West lack essentially this continuity;

In sum, man-nature-universe relationship in India is firmly embedded in its traditions which give rise to its performing arts as a total expression of people's consciousness out of a particular social, psychological and spiritual framework. It remains to be seen whether technological advancements are going to work for profound psychical changes, — none or very insulated at the moment.

The above diagnostics leads us to the inference that if transformation to bring the psychical identification in phase with technological development does not take place in the multitudinous clientale of Indian performing arts, — the audience would go on subscribing to the world-views known to them, although intellectually they may subscribe to what the winds from First and Second Worlds bring to them.

Arising from the above, two trends in towns and metropolises are already discernible: on one hand, there is a growing impression that the traditional art-forms have outlived their times and are unable to catch the complex contemporary idiom with their limited depths; on the other hand, Western technology is bringing forth only third-removed, canistered artistic expressions which do not have the vibrant resilience of traditional arts. This split-image phenomenon is illustrated in the following paragraphs:

The traditional forms of drama have proved exceptionally virile here in capturing city-audience, with a limited foray into contemporary problems and taking the help of new techniques of light and sound. It is a sobering sight to see milling city populace in Calcutta flocking to the Jatra pandals to witness the melodramic spectacle steeped in a style which was created in a hygone era.

Contemporary plays, on the other hand, attract limited public (despite the brave attempts of the group theatres like Behurupee and others) in Calcutta and even less so in the other metropolises. Badal Sirkar's pioneering plays on guilt, anger and death-fixation are all but accepted generally and Utpal Dutta's dialectic fireworks attract people more for his brilliant stage-craft than his borrowed philosophy. Only Vijay Tendulkar's theme have tended to be genuinely Indian over time and, to that extent, find acceptance. Mohan Rakesh has been found esoteric and Delhi's population loves far more the rustic broadsides in the recent Punjabi presentations than any intellectual stuff.

Folk music has shown a certain resilience in the north-eastern India, but hardly so elsewhere, to meet squarely. The contemporary scene, Classical music continues a relative success-run in the metropolises, but purists would permit neither styles nor lyrics to relate to contemporaneity.

Nothing like a popular music has grown in the modern urban India. The canned film-music dishing out film-sentiments in the voices of half a dozen signers—in a land of 640 millions - who render play-back support to hundreds of different film-stars, is its nearest equivalent. The absurdity that any one female play-back singer can support one or all heroines with perfectly normal vocal chord does not strike anyone and the fact that even a million people cannot throw up ten singers or composers - which would have made 6400 of them in films and outside - is an eloquent testimony for India's current musical creativity.

Lustrous and virile folk-dances are very popular in all towns and metropolises. Classical dances are India's great assets and continue to draw public. But neither has been made contemporary in any sense of the term. The themes for them are still age-old ones and while one does not question certain perennial values in life and nature to continue, one definitely wonders why the modern sensibility of a lyricist or a choreographer does not permit him to take up a modern theme and relate what well-tried formats of Kathakali, Kathak and Bharatanatyam to today's youth for whom child Krishna's pranks, Satyabhama's jealousy or Mandodari's infatuations have hardly any relevance, - as would have, say, the villagers' perpetual sojourn to the glittering metropolises.

On the contrary, the first-level copying of formal elements from the Vest as in Uday Shankar's ballets does not achieve the transfer of the totality of the Western experience and is unlikely to succeed in an alien soil without the supportive world-vision.

Discounting the peer-boxes as folk-substitutes for films, commercial films have today 8,000 cine-houses to cater to the Indian public at the low rate of one for every 80,000 people. Modern technology has made films mobility qualitatively different from other performing arts (needing physical presence of performers), making it the most popular means of cheap entertainment in a trouble-torn life. No wonder film-producers do not let their themes deviate from the paths of rigidity accepted social norms so as to succeed as wholesome "family" entertainment. Even religious potboilers starting a wholly new pseudo-spiritual craze or film-stars being worshipped as gods are observed *en passant.*

Again, the idiom of artistic films remains a remote concern to the viewing public falling to be moved by the off-beat experiments of the West-exposed directors. Along with the governed, the government does not dream of starting just a score of mini-sized theatres in the State capitals to encourage viewing of good films and thereby create a new film-sensibility and a discerning public.

Projecting our observations of the contemporary scene into the future, the following 3 alternative scenarios can be envisaged relating to our study-area :-

The tradition is presumed to continue its stronghold on the villages with their socially inequalitarian and economically backward communities, with the towns harbouring a mix of middle class of artisan and professional origin and the metropolises their own components of class-structure. As a whole not much change is visualised in bringing the urban and metropolitan classes in-phase with the Western industrial behaviour-norms and culture-pattern. Further, as a matter of cultural policy, it is presumed that efforts of revival of classical music and dance will continue as hitherto-fore mainly under the private aegis, with commercial film (and partly commercial stage, particularly in Calcutta) continuing to play its useful role of entertaining the public. The group theatre and artistic films will continue to languish, the latter despite FFC's occasional succour.

Under this scenario, the performing arts cannot have a very rosy future. Traditional performing art-forms are in no danger of extinction with the rural audience fending for its main target-group. and spilt-overs benefiting the tradition-minded urban and metropolitan classes.. It is unlikely, on the other hand, that classical music and dance - apart from its diminishing coterie of enthusiasts - could over find a niche in the rural communities let alone the sophisticated group theatre and artistic films. There is little chance of contemporary music and dance to arise with a local habitation and a name. Allowing a generalisation, we name the group theatre, artistic films and experimental music and dance as "contemporary performing arts" as against the traditional performing art-forms with classical music and dance as "traditional performing arts".

It is quite likely that while the society as a whole shows little or slow inertial change from the current *status quo* the intellectual intelligentsia forces hands of administration to catalyse an enlightened cultural policy. This might mean that (i) small and basement theatres are established to help create Indian theatre of the contemporary kind; (ii) mini-cinema houses come into existence at State capitals to make possible regular showings of Hindi and other language films with good themes, competent treatment and high technical finish; (iii) small clubs and organisations are encouraged to come up (and later utilised by regional radio and television stations, after spotting talents) with popular ideas on music and dance with a contemporary idiom and (iv) movie centres like FT Institute of Pune come up in all States and for all performing arts, with an assured State encouragement if not support (like the Second World Countries). It is entirely possible that implementation of all the above policies is made to pay for themeselves in the long run.

In the above event, there is likely to be a qualitative rise in the popularity of the contemporary performing arts and perhaps a healthy amalgam with the best from the traditional art forms. For instance, beside the entertainment needs, the newly-boosted performing arts could satisfy greatly the participation needs and even be used for conveying socio-moral messages with an enthusiastic acceptance (unlike the currently tried didactic, State-sponsored experiments, usually super-imposed on a reluctant audience).

The ideal scenario is that where an enlightened cultural policy, as outlined for the second scenario, is evenly matched with a social change of the far-reaching kind. It is presumed that (i) the economic and technological changes will finally overtake the entire social fabric creating an even spread of enlightened middle class; (ii) capital-creation will create a self-sustaining economy with the concommitant social mobility and liberal values eroding the traditional class-structure; (iii) both employment opportunities, and basic and higher education will be more freely available, to give rise eventually to a real welfare society where mental drudgery for the vast under-privileged disappears yielding place possibly to creative leisure.

Under this scenario, one can expect a qualitative improvement both in the available variety of performing arts (ensuing from an enlightened cultural policy) and the need-spectrum from all sections of the rural, urban and metropolitan audience. One, therefore, expects a more proliferation in contemporary art-forms and modernisation in traditional art-forms, — making for enrichment in them, treatment and technical devices all the way.

To sum up, the lessons should be obvious. First, the traditional performing arts have so far been robust feeders to the contemporary scene to provide all-round entertainment, encourage participation and slip in even moral upliftment. As they get out of phase with contemporary reality, they would cease to satisfy the viewers as is already evident to the young urban and metropolitan crowd. By failing to make them contemporary, the urban India is virtually impoverishing them.

Secondly, performing arts do reflect life. Still feudal upbringing and dependence on parental thinking — where a boy settles for security and arranged marriage through interviewing girls, his liberal education notwithstanding — are paramount in the Indian society. To that extent, originally, creativity and variety to sustain society, as also to sustain its performing arts, is perhaps yet uncalled for. Unlike Philippines, which lost its traditional moorings, thanks to an all-pervading American influence, India seems to be well-content after resurrecting its classical music and dance. By not adding to these arts or making them contemporary, the new generation — who would make the future audience — seems to be getting lost.

Finally, it is the core of city-based cultural intellectuals whose ambivalence has to be thoroughly shaken. The vibrant resilience of the traditional performing arts is missing in the West-bred drama and artistic films, apart from the cutflower existence of any experimental dance and music. An understanding administrative action is needed to create a suitable environment where meaningful performing arts can flourish and resonate in a contemporary India in its varied socio-geographical millieu. □

# Cosmogony, Theology and the New Physics

*Purasu Balakrishnan*

The grouping of Cosmogony, Theology and the New Physics together as a triad may come as an anathema to the scientist, particularly the astro-physicist. As Laurie John says in his introduction to the first chapter of his book, 'Cosmology Now' :

> Cosmology faces scientists with a challenge that, for sheer magnitude, cannot be surpassed. Its field of inquiry is the entire universe. The challenge : to describe that universe as it was, is now and will be in the far future, and to relate this description to our earthly experience. Little wonder that for centuries this enormous task has been the province of the theologian. Our attempts to use the language of science to describe the startling information now being gathered from the depths of space is straining our understanding to the uttermost. Even, some would say, beyond.

Taking up this thread in his introduction to the last chapter of the book, he says :

> In the introduction to Chapter 1, I referred to the comparison between cosmology and theology. By now it will be clear that these twin edifices of intellectual endeavour stand on the common ground of experience but do not interact at all. This far from satisfactory situation places the cosmologist in a dilemma. As a scientist, is he morally justified in adopting non-scientific categories of thought in order to entertain theological concepts — concepts he often needs to give himself some comfort in an otherwise alien universe?

Professor Laurie John's observations will come home to any scientist of any discipline. I may make it clear at once that my object in getting some historical facts together and setting them

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beside the modern scientific concept of the universe is not to entertain or cater to any theological concept but arises from the harmless pastime of putting things together.

It is refreshing to find Professor Laurie John refer to the divide between theology and cosmology as a far from satisfactory situation. Any point of similarity in thinking between the two, however faint, that may be revealed in this account, may be, in his own words, some comfort.

The historical debate between science and religion which started in the last century, triggered off by the publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species*, centred mainly on the evolution of man and the creation of the universe. The Christian concept of creation had to be thrown overboard and the account given in *Genesis* of the Bible strikes the modern mind as naive.

While the Biblical account treats of creation as arising fully made, like Minerva born in panoply, the Song of Creation in the Rigveda (1500 BC) strikes a profound note of philosophic doubt into which modern man can fully enter :-

> Then was not non-existent nor existent :
> there was no realm of air, no sky beyond it.
> What covered in, and where ? and what gave shelter ?
> Was water there, unfathomed depth of water ?
> Death was not then, nor was there aught immortal :
> no sign was there, the day's and night's divider.
> That one thing, breathless, breathed by its own nature :
> apart from it was nothing whatsoever.
> Darkness there was : at first concealed in darkness,
> this All was indiscriminated chaos.
> All that existed then was void and formless : by the great
> power of warmth was born that unit.
> Thereafter rose desire in the beginning, Desire,
> the primal seed and germ of spirit.
> Sages who searched with their heart's thought
> discovered the existent's kinship in the non-existent.
> Transversely was their severing line extended :
> what was above it then, and what below it ?
> There were begetters, there were mighty forces,
> free action here and energy up yonder.
> Who verily knows and who can here declare it,
> whence it was born and whence comes this creation ?
> The gods are later than this world's production.
> Who knows, then, whence it first came into being ?

He, the first origin of this creation, whether he formed it all
or did not form it,
Whose eye controls this world in hghest heaven,
he verily knows it, or perhaps he knows not.

—*Rigveda, x 129*
*(Translation : Max Muller)*

There are other accounts of creation. According to Manusmriti (200 BC—300 AD, the Self-Existent first created water and deposited in it a seed, the precursor of a golden egg, out of which rose Brahma. Brahma then created heaven and earth from the egg itself, and further more ten Prajapatis (mind-born gods) who completed the work of creation. Another account declares that Brahma rose from ether and that his offsprings created the universe. A third account describes Brahma as dividing himself into two parts, male and female.

The how of creation is variously conceived. The *Sankhya* school postulates a primeval matter (*prakriti*) out of which the world was created. The *Vedanta* school declares that matter as well as soul derives from Brahman. The why of creation is explained as the sport (*lila*) of God — which is as good a confession of ignorance as anything else.

In the time of the *Rigveda* itself a Creator God appeared in the horizon of theological speculation, called originally Prajapati, meaning 'Lord of Beings'. The *Purusha Sukta* (Hymn of Man) in the *Rigveda* celebrates Prajapati, conceived as *Purusha* or embodied spirit, as the original source of the universe, the life-principle in all life :

A thousand[1] heads hath Purusha, a thousand eyes, a
thousand feet.
On every side pervading earth he fills a space ten fingers
wide[2].
This Purusha is all that yet hath been and all that is to be,
The lord of immortality which waxes greater still by food.
So mighty is his greatness; yea, greater than this is Purusha.
All creatures are one-fourth of him, three-fourths eternal life
in heaven.

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[1] 'Thousand' means innumerable.
[2] 'A space ten fingers wide' refers to the region of the heart, supposedly the seat of the soul.

With three-fourths Purusha went up : onefourth of him again was here.
Thence he strode out to every side over what eats not and what eats.
From him Viraj was born; again Purusha from Viraj was born.
As soon as he was born he spread eastward and westward o'er the earth.
When gods prepared the sacrifice with Purusha as their offering
Its oil was spring; the holy gift was autumn; summer was the wood.
They balmed as victim on the grass Purusha in earliest time.
With him the deities and all Sadhyas and Rishis sacrificed.
From that great general sacrifice the dripping fat was gathered up.
He formed the creatures of the air, and animals both wild and tame.
From that great general sacrifice Richas and Sama-hymns were born :
Therefrom were spells and charms produced; the Yajus had its birth from it.
From it were horses born, from it all cattle with wo rows of teeth;
From it were generated kine, from it the goats and sheep were born.
When they divided Purusha, how many portions did they make?
What do they call his mouth, his arms?
what do they call his thighs and feet?
The Brahman was his mouth, of both his arms was the Rajanya made.
His thighs became the Vaisya, from his feet the Sudra was produced.
The moon was gendered from his mind, and from his eye the sun had birth;
Indra and Agni from his mouth were born, and Vayu from his breath.
Forth from his navel came mid-air; the sky was fashioned from his head;
Earth from his feet, and from his ears the regions. Thus they formed the worlds. Seven fencing sticks had he, thrice seven layers of fuel were prepared.

> When the gods, offering sacrifice, bound, as their victim,
> Purusha.
> Gods, sacrificing, sacrificed the victim : these were the
> earliest holy ordinances.
> The mighty ones attained the height of heaven,
> there where the Sadhyas, gods of old, are dwelling.

— *Rigveda, x 90*
(Translation : Max Muller),

In the noumenal dance of Siva (as distinguished from the phenomenal dance of Kali) we again have a point of contact with science in terms of cosmogenic energy. The book *Cosmology Now* ends with the sentence (of Professor John Taylor) :

> Eventually we may be able to recognise in ever-greater detail the universe for what it truly is : energy made manifest.

A little earlier he has posed the question,

> Even if the universe is energy, why is it here at all ?.

and replied,

> The form of the question requires some idea of purpose in order to it answer it. I have claimed above that purpose is only a dream in our minds, and is not visible in the universe.

In the following exposition of the Dance of Siva according to our religious texts, no answer to Professor .Taylor's question, is found.

The Dance of Siva is now familiar to the world through the Chola (Tamil) bronzes of Nataraja, 'the Lord of Dance' — the name given to Siva in this role, the bronzes dating from XI century onwards. Siva is Pure Consciousness or Pure Bliss, and his Dances, embodying it, is called 'The Dance of Bliss' (*aananda-tandavam*). He again is the embodiment of primal energy, performing the five activities of Godhead. These are creation (*srishti*), maintenance (*sthiti*), dissolution (*samhara*), phenomenal masking (*tirobhava* — a masking which endows apparent reality to the ever-changing phenomena of life and the universe), and grace (*anugraha*). The drum in his upper right hand produces the cosmogenic energy of creation. Counterpoising this is the upper left hand, bearing on its palm a tongue of flame, the element of destruction. The lower right hand, held in the 'fear not' (*abhaya*) posture, grants protection and maintenance. The lower left hand, lifted across the chest, points downwards to the obliquely uplifted left foot which bestows grace or refuge or release. The right foot is poised on the demon called 'Apasmara or Mayulaka (meaning forgetfulness or heedlessness) who represents phenomenal existence — the perpetual cavalcade of life under different forms and names. These sum up the totality of life and the universe, and are the play or the dance of the Lord.

What concerns us here is the cosmic energy produced by the drum which is even more significant than the well-known 'primal rhythmic energy' of dance. In the words of Ananda Coomaraswamy :

> In the night of *Brahman*, Nature is inert, and cannot dance till Shiva wills it : He rises from his rapture, and dancing sends through inert matter pulsing waves of awakening sound, and lo ! matter also dances, appearing as a glory round about Him. Dancing, He sustains its manifold phenomena. In the fulness of time, still dancing, He destroys all forms and names by fire[3] and gives new rest. This is poetry, but none the less science.

Fritjof Capra's words (in his *Tao of Physics*) reveal the insight of a modern scientist into the significance of the Dance of Siva :

> The dance of Shiva is the dancing universe; the ceaseless flow of energy going through an infinite variety of patterns that melt into one another. Modern physics has shown that the rhythm of creation and destruction is not only manifest in the turn of the seasons and in the birth and death of all living creatures, but is also the very essence of inorganic matter. According to Quantumfield theory, all interactions between the constituents of matter take place through the emission and absorption of virtual particles. More than that, the dance of creation and destruction is the basis of the very existence of matter, since all material particles 'self-interact' by emitting and reabsorbing

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[3] The last statement seems to the present writer to be a simplification of the symbol.

> virtual particles. Modern physics has thus revealed that every sub-atomic particle not only performs an energy dance, but also is an energy dance; a pulsating process of creation and destruction.
> ... For the modern physicists, then, Shiva's dance is the dance of subatomic matter. As in Hindu mythology, it is a continual dance of creation and destruction involving the whole cosmos; the basis of all existence and of all natural phenomena.

A new awareness of the universe came upon the scientists in the third decade of this century, before which the post-Galileo glimpse in the seventeenth century which displaced the earth from the centre of the universe became myopic. The awareness was twofold — of the still unconceived immensity of the universe and the entirely unimagined expanding nature of the universe. The sun and the solar system were displaced from the centre of the Milky Way system. Next the Milky Way system suffered a similar fate in respect of the universe.

The disc of the Milky Way is about 100,000 light years long (light travelling with a velocity of 186,000 miles per second); its diameter is 20,000 light years at the centre and 1000 light years at the extremities; and it contains some 10,000 million stars of which the sun is one. This has been relegated to the position of being a small part of the observable universe. The nearest extra-galactic spiral nebula, Andromeda, is two million light years away from us. It has been estimated that there are trillions of galaxies like the Milky Way within the field of a 200 inch telescope.

A new dimension of wonder discovered is the expanding nature of the universe so that even the observable universe is receding from the penetration of our optical and radio telescopes. The trail of this phenomenon was picked up by the 'red-shift' in the spectra of the light from the nebulae. Hubble interpreted this as a 'Doppler effect' resulting from the recession of the nebulae. The recessional velocities of nebulae at a distance of 2000 light years have been found to be 20% of the velocity of light, i.e. over 30,000 miles per second. The radio galaxy in Bootes constellation, which is at a distance of 4½ thousand million light years, is moving away from us at a velocity of 46% of that of light. The recessional velocities of quasars (quasi-stellar radio-sources) approach 70-80%. Sir Bernard Lovell recounts the case of a distant quasar, CTA 102 (6000 million light years away) whose radio signals, obtained shortly before a lecture, were lost for demonstration.

So we are living in an expanding universe, the galaxies receding from us and one another at velocities which are to be measured against that of light. This has been compared to the expansion of a baloon which is being inflated so that any dots marked on it will recede from one another with the expansion.

This remarkable phenomenon, which the expanding universe is, raises, in the words of Sir Bernard Lovell, in an acute form the problem of the origin of the universe, which he poses in the following terms :

> Was there a beginning in time, will there be an end to time, was there a beginning and is there an end of space, and how did this vast amount of material — the galaxies and stars — come into existence ?

Working backwards in time, with the measured rate of expansion, through a universe progressively getting smaller and denser, one arrives at a finite time in the past to a compacted universe — could it be a point? — with almost infinite density. This state has been placed 10,000 million years ago. That time may be marked as the beginning of the universe, the beginning of time and space. At this epoch of creation there is said to be a singularity of space and time.

The universe does not lend itself to be captured by mathematical reasoning (based on Einstein's theory of general relativity) into a specific delineated state and course. For this reasoning itself leads to several cosmological models, depending on an undetermined factor called the cosmical constant. Assumption of the value of zero for this constant gives a model which accords with the observational timing of the compacted universe and has ushered the 'big bang' theory of the origin of the universe. According to the theory, the universe was a compacted condensate of extremely high density 10,000 million years ago when an explosion occurred in this for unknown reasons, scattering the primeval hydrogen gas into space, and this was followed by a condensation of the gas, resulting in galaxies and stars. Gamow calls this explosion the hot big bang, and has calculated that the temperature at that time was 10,000 million $(10)^{10}$ degrees absolute, when primeval matter could exist only as hot nuclear gas, made of nuclear elements.

The microwave background radiation present in space to-day is believed to be relic radiation from the initial hot bang. The present expansion of the universe is believed to be due to the continuing attenuated impetus of the original bang.

World models, worked out on the assumption of positive and negative values for the cosmical constant also resemble the big bang model. Proceeding on a positive cosmical constant, George Lemaitre arrived at the conclusion that the beginning of the universe was not 10,000 million years ago, as calculated on the big bang theory, but 60,000 millions ago. The primeval matter then was not a condensate of nearly infinite density (as in the big bang model) but a nuclear fluid with a density, a million million million times that of water, contained in 'a primeval atom' or more correctly, a primeval nucleus. With the explosion the fluid broke up into fragments. An interesting feature of this model was that the cosmic forces operating were those of repulsion in contrast to Newtonian attraction that we know here. In this model, then, the expanding nature of the universe is the result of the repulsive forces,and not the continuing disturbance after the initial violent explosion.

Cosmological models worked with negative values of the cosmical constant present their own unique feature. Here the universe undergoes, alternately and cyclically, expansion and contraction. 'Singular' conditions of high compression occur every 10,000 million years or so, but are reversible.

Sir Bernard Lovell describes this phenomenon of alternate expansion and contraction of the universe also from another approach :

> There is another piece of evidence which indicates that if certain assumptions are made about the implication of the red shifts of the quasers then the relation between the velocity of recession and the distance favours an oscillating model. In particular, on this model the universe began from an infinitely small condensate with infinite density, and we now live in the expanding phase. After several thousand million more years of expansion a contraction will begin and eventually the universe will return to a singular condition of high density. In the second part of this cycle the galaxies will exhibit blue shifts instead of the red shifts associated with the present expansion.

We have to break in on our survey of scientific cosmogony and revert to ancient Indian cosmogony for a while since there are similarities in the pattern of thinking between the two which call for attention for what they may be worth. We quote from A.L.

Basham's *The Wonder that was India* (Grove Press Inc. New York, 1954, p. 320-321) :

> According to this system (Hindu cosmology) the cosmos passes through cycles within cycles for all eternity. The basic cycle is the *kalpa*, a 'day of Brahma', or 4,320 million earthly years. His nights constitute a 'year of Brahma', and his life is 100 such years long. (Brahma is said to be now in his fifty-first year). The largest cycle is therefore 311,040,000 million years long, after which the whole universe returns to the ineffable world-spirit, until another creator god is evolved. (Though the terms 'day' and 'year of Brahma' are commonly used, the god whose life contains the universe is, as we have seen, thought of by Vaisnavites as Vishnu and by Saivites as Siva, and Brahma is a mere demiurge, the god in his creative aspect).
>
> In each cosmic day the god creates the universe and again absorbs it. During the cosmic night he sleeps, and the whole universe is gathered up into his body, where it remains a potentiality. Within each kalpa are fourteen *manvantaras*, or secondary cycles, each lasting 306,720,000 years, with long intervals between them. In these periods the world is recreated, and a new Manu appears, as the progenitor of the human race. We are now in the seventh manvantara of the kalpa, of which the Manu is known as Manu Vaivasvata.
>
> Each manvantara contains seventy-one *Mahayugas*, or aeons, of which a thousand form the kalpa. Each mahayuga is in turn divided into four *yugas* or ages, called *Krta*, *Treta*, *Dvapara* and *Kali*. Their lengths are respectively 4,800, 3,600, 2,400 and 1,200 'years of the gods', each of which equals 360 human years. Each yuga represents a progressive decline in piety, morality, strength, stature, longevity and happiness. We are at present in the Kali-yuga, which began, according to tradition, in 3102 BC, believed to be the year of the Mahabharata War. .. An earlier tradition would place the Mahabharata c. 900 BC.
>
> The system of the four yugas immediately brings to mind the four ages of ancient Greece — and indeed the Indian yugas are sometimes named after metals — gold, silver, copper and iron. A similar doctrine of four ages existed in

ancient Persia, and the three schemes may have been borrowed from a common source.

Setting the time scale of ancient Indian cosmology against that of New Physics Cosmology, one sees that they are comparable.

The basic Indian cosmological cycle or *kalpa* is 4,320 million years which constitute a 'day of Brahma' when he creates the universe. Of equal length is his night when he gathers into himself the whole universe where it remains a potentiality. His full day then is 8,640 million years.

With negative values for the cosmical constant the cosmological model undergoes, alternately and cyclically, expansion and constraction. 'Singular' conditions of high compression, which obtain at the time of creation of the universe, occur every 10,000 million years or so. In the 'oscillating model' of Sir Bernard Lovell he determines that 'after several thousand million years of expansion a contraction will begin and eventually the universe will return to a singular condition of high density.'

According to the big bang theory, which assumes the value of zero for the cosmical constant, the universe began with the explosion of a highly compacted universe 10,000 million years ago.

With positive values for the cosmical constant, George Lemaitre pictured a original giant 'primeval atom' from which the universe arose. This reminds one of Indian mythology's 'golden egg'. On this model he put the beginning of the universe at 60,000 million years ago. This will work out to 7 days of Brahma whose life is stated to be 100 years on this time scale. (A curious reminder of the Sabbath.)

Radically different from the evolutionary cosmological theories described earlier, derived from Einstein's general theory of relativity, is the steady state theory propounded by Bondi, Gold and Hoyle in 1948, and modified by Hoyle and Narlikar in 1966. This holds that the universe remains in a steady state with no event or singularity to mark a beginning or an end, and that the loss of galaxies is made good by continuous creation of hydrogen gas from which they are formed again. This continued creation of hydrogen gas from which they are formed again. This continued creation of matter keeps constant the density of the universe in spite of its expansion. The expansion of the universe, according to this theory, is due to the force arising from the process of creation.

This theory has been finding steadily less acceptance among astrophysicists. Radio observations made at very high frequencies seem to support the big bang theory, being interpreted as emission from the primeval universe after its expansion from the high density state.

Proponents of the big bang theory are aware that there are aspects of the universe that cannot be known. Perhaps the term 'singularity' is a confession of this.

Sir Bernard Lovell, in his book *Our Present Knowledge of the Universe*, says :

> As human beings with inquiring minds we must ask how the singularity came into existence. Any answer lies outside the scope of scientific observation and theory ... The answer to the cosmological problem may well contain other factors than observational astronomy and theoretical cosmology. The truthful answer of the scientist can only be that it is unreasonable to seek a scientific answer to a situation which existed before time equals zero.

We may trace further the events following the Big Hot Bang.

When the universe was one second old the temperature was around 10,000 $(10)^{10}$ degrees absolute, and the primeval matter was a hot nuclear gas, made of nuclear particles, namely protons, neutrons and electrons, moving too fast to be bound into atoms. The situation, as Gamow describes it, was that of an atom-smashing machine. With the rapid expansion that followed in the wake of the big bang the temperature dropped to a few hundred million degrees — a process lasting from a few seconds to two or three minutes — when the nuclear binding force became effective, and the 'cooking' of light nucleii took place from the collisions and combinations of protons and neutorns. It has been suggested by Professor Chandrasekhar that heavy elements were cooked earlier at a higher temperature, and lighter elements cooked later at a lower temperature, and that these were held in a state of 'frozen equilibrium'. It is believed that heavier nucleii are made in the interior of the stars.

Lemaitre suggested that primeval matter was a dense nuclear fluid, forming the 'primeval atom' or 'primeval nucleus', the temperature at that time being below the 'critical temperature' of the nuclear fluid. When expansion started, the fluid became unstable and broke into fragments. The size of this 'primitive atom' was such that, as Lemaitre describes, it would take 260 successive fragmentations for it to get reduced to the size of the atom as we know it, supposing that the fragmentation at each step was into two equal halves. (This giant atom rather reminds one of Indian mythology's 'golden egg' !).

It has been worked out by Gamow that the entire process of atom-building took less than an hour after the big bang when the temperature was around $10^9$ degrees and when aggregation of neutrons was possible.

Whatever be the process of formation of the atomic species, we see that this works on a substratum of nuclear material — protons and neutrons — already in existence. How did they come to be there ? One may ask, 'before matter — even nuclear matter — what ?' The reply is ready : 'before matter — energy !' This reply was given by Einstein long ago, in his famous law, $E = mc^2$, which states that energy and matter are equivalent forms. However matter and energy have very different physical attributes. Quantum Mechanics permits the calculation of the probability of conversion of matter into energy, in terms of particle, anti-particle (whose proton and electron carry electrical charges, the reverse of those obtaining in the particle) and annihilation. It also permits the calculation of the probability of conversion of energy into matter, in terms of pair-creation. However it has not been shown so far that such conversions can occur within the framework of general relativity. Quantum Theory elucidated the atom but not the nucleus. As Capra says in his book, every description of natural phenomena involving velocities close to the speed of light (like for example, the velocity of the nucleons) has to take relativity theory into account. In other words, the account has to be relativistic. Recently Professor S. Chandrasekhar, working within the framework of the general theory of relativity, developed analytical tools which allow the exact solutions to problems which hitherto had defied solutions. With these he has shown that when two highly concentrated gravitational fields collide, energy is converted into matter. 'This,' says Professor Wali, 'opens the possibility of understanding, starting from pure energy, how matter is formed in the very early universe from purely gravitational interactions.'

Professor Chandrasekhar's own words (in a personal communication to the author throws further light on this :

> My most recent work has very little bearing on the basic questions except very tangentially. My work does show that phenomena — unexpected — can occur in Nature according to relativity; and they *may* bear on the 'early universe' i.e. the epoch following the 'big bang'. But it is too early to foretell the nature of the impact my new results will have. There is no doubt in my mind that the phenomenon — the reversible conversion of massless particles moving with the velocity of light into a perfect fluid of a special kind — is a very real one.

This takes us back to the enunciation that the universe is energy made manifest. This takes us back also to the noumenal dance of Siva which renders that fact into a blended image of religion, art, science and beauty. □

# Ten Poems

*Sitakant Mahapatra*

(Translated from the original Oriya by the author)

## YOUR VILLAGE

The ample afternoon
burns down to a thinness as
the steep hill-face unbuttons,
for the tired traveller :
the blood-smeared horizon
and the crouching hills waving a dance
around your village.

Hastily the sun climbs down
the smooth steps of your cheeks,
the pincers of the hills drop the glowing cinder
into wind-sucked wetness.

I conjugate my despair with dark *sal* trees.

In your village
elephants dance on painted mud walls,
flowers and honeycombs on *sal* tall bodies;
the young *dhangda* seeking honey
cascades down the blue darkness
to wet stars, crushed petals.

None ever returns from the whorled centre.

Starlight breaks the pitcher of silence;
grieving wombs dance in rhythmic fury
of interlocked despairs :
unbidden serrated shadows
rainbow dust in cupped hands.

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Next morning we return,
your village still asleep
nestling in the hills :
the child *Krishna*
between enormous breasts of *Putana.*

## THE RUINED TEMPLE

Into the apsara's navel
silently
stars and dew-drops fall
all through the night.

On the steps of the temple's pond
the greasy patchwork clothes
of tradition and history
are washed
on the large shoulders of Ganesa
giver of all knowledge.

Like blind whimsical gods
or like a sudden gust of wind
two or four bats
fly out from its dark womb
towards an uncertain tomorrow
along the banks of
an indifferent sky.

The unending afternoon comes to an end.
Somewhere the bullock-cart's creaking
slowly fades.

It seems as though in a moment
time would stop
over derelict empty fields
at the edge of the gathering dusk.

Someone calls out
someone's name
in affection
full of a desperate need to possess the other

(Is it in this life, or in another life ?)

A smile on the water's broad and shining face
becomes a gesture of sudden hope
and pulls the temple's shadow
and the rising moon
together, lovingly.

The long day ends, waiting.
Before leaving with a weary yawn
the leprous beggar woman
still wishes for the arrival
of some anguished devotee
at the temple door.

## THE ELECTION

Our jeep crawls to your village
seeking strange melodies
from the roaring sun;
wishing to instal
a few cool moments of bliss
in the howling chaos
of private agonies.

Our dark longings do not touch you
nor our clever trappings :
posters, symbols, pep talks, handbills;
for your grief outlives empires.

The cold grandchildren
awaken in your heart
as you discern
muted allegories
on our ashen faces.

Here the great persuaders
are little things and not so hidden :
cheap plastics, cheaper nylons
dark glasses to blot out suns.

One step in hunger
another in *atman*
you decide :
the anguish of choice.

## COCK-FIGHT

Facing each other, they trumpet,
the two heroes
awkwardly armed to the teeth.

No longer the drudgery
of looking for insects in stinking places,
or of hiding from the jaws of hungry cats
and hungrier men,
shedding now
the cowardice of centuries.

The village trembles
in mad bursts
of shouts and battle-cries,
Pandavas and Kauravas
ranged in the battle-filed
of Kurukshetra.

The heroes understand nothing,
why this battle, why these cries,
the tumult in the silent acres.

Something plucks at the nerves,
makes the blood boil,
the necks swell and the feathers rise
as if they would fly off from the body.
Anger and murderous hate
fill each cell.

In a flash the great war begins
and the evening sky
is splattared with blood.

A moment,
and it is over,
evening's red after-glow
fades in the sky,
blood runs
and a day ends.

The village returns
carrying a lump of startled flesh
in silence.

## BHUBANESWAR : 1972

In vain I have strained to listen to
the voice of your black-robed
moss-moustached stones.

Their hypnotic stare
has burnt me in its furious summer
their muted pain has grown
in my limbs.

The impassive gesture of your gods
has extended to the dumb limits
of my being;
my interior sea ever beating
at the frontiers of death.

And so the seasons turn :
the inexorable logic
of dwarfness claims,
to each his inanity
to each his loneliness
his broken promise
hidden malice, untold pain
speeches made and forgotten.

The sky's bird-pond grows empty
gods drowse the long noons;
and history glistens
at the rim of infinity.

Empires :
Bhaumas, Kesharis, Gangas, Kharavela, Ashoka
confined by bitter asphalt;
millions of twittering words
sinking as corpses in the inflated dark wombs
of mikes glazing as rivers :
miles of alphabet
on conveyor-belts of grey newsprint
vanishing into the void.

Bhubaneswar
keep me hidden
in the nests of your darkness;
appear Radha-like
in the blue-door of my heart
when the rain beats;
for I belong to you
like the child's kite;
make me flutter, make me play.

## PSALM

My sub-soil knows
the thirst for unbroken springs
and opens its lips.

Whose masked fingers
feed cotton
at this harvest time ?

I stammer my dreams
down highways of dark nights
and yearnings of wombs;
yield dear the secrets lodged
in the concave hollows
of mocked grimace.

My corn ripens bare
in inchoate mornings
and milk strains at the pods;
my rallying tendril

gathers me in from green deceptions
from the insistence of intemperate steel
and the light-paths of the sun.

Enough now
the accusing forms
of life's puppetry;
enough the clay texts
that interpret the sun.

Unsexed, my blood curses
the dark god that asked
frolicking birds be still
and share the humility
of earth-fruit's ultimate ash.

## A MORNING IN THE RAINS

The season of rains has come:
the time of rains
without punctuation.
At its bugle call
the morning trembles.

The weeping cloud's
repeated caress
has erased a few white letters
from the blue name-plate
at the gate.
It is the season of the rains.

Drenched to the bone
the child walks alone to his school;
The doors and windows
of the houses are barred
as if the village
had not even a thatch
since the beginning of Time,
as if the entire population
melted away in fear of the rains
and the thunder echoes
from the smithy of dark clouds.

Who is asleep in those houses?
Indifferent parents?
Complacent Time?
Dark fear of Death?
Like a peacock sighting dark clouds
Death and the child
are both eager, restless.

The child's summer vacation
is at an end:
it's time to realise
all happiness must end.

The season of rains has come
and death is still abroad
on long vacation,
as life cannot rest
and seeks to get lost, silently,
in the white *malhar* of the rains.

At this hour of the clouds
dreams float in
as way-lost butterflies;
You start up
as if from a trance
driven by unknown thoughts,
iron my clothes,
and arrange them
on the neat skeleton of a hanger
for my next birth.

## THE PAINTER

from pores of his skin
multiple suns swim away
cancelling the sky.

rivers look back
hills hint at the forgotten distance
breathless in the cumulus of meaning.

colour is only arithmetic
shattering clear air
mindlessly.

moon's dirty handiwork obvious
scattered on the landscape
unmasked pains
mimick a slow dance.

linear flames
converging on darkness
welding deaths and dreams
relating time to a hypothesis
and shapes to a toneless foliage.

## OLD MAN IN SUMMER

Summer has a witch's charm :
bruised nerves, yellow with longing
the spring died like a lonely lamb
passive martyr to its preliminary passion.

My brittle despair discovers
decapitated heads, crying blood;
the city suspended, languid as milk,
between the blue stings of the hill
and the flimsy moisture of the stars;
between repose and elegance
its black stare consummates
my wild night's battle,
in the inflammation of *Krishnachuras.*

After the dark intensity
morning is weak with longings
in the pink deserts of the city
girls dance as parrots.

Dry leaves crossing the street
in a sudden gust of whirlwind
bring traffic to a stop;
april's feeble voice recites

blood-sermons from the blue conflagration
of the sky; confusing
the bewildered birds.
All my spiders
dead in its shining ports,
I mould only a dark memory.

## PEASANT

Rama, of the colour of deep-blue grass
Samudragupta, Akbar, Kapilendradeva
Whom, Whom have you known?

Have you heard the advancing tide
of horsehooves on the pages of history,
the deafening sound of myriad conches
blowing together?
Have you seen the clouds of dust
the swarms of locusts, the trembling earth,
horses, elephants, chariots,
ravaged burnt-out villages,
heard the wailing in the dark,
the terrifying cries?

What do they mean to you, anyway?
Everyday, like another day,
you would stand in the sun
like the stubborn clay, looking
at the indifferent blue dome above
slowly wither and burn
till raindrops fall like whispers of *mantras*
to drench you like a tree, like a broken wall.

And when you return home from the field
in the rain-tired evening
the soaked rice would be delightfully sour
the fried greens still warm and tasty
the *mrundanoam* beat would resound
in the village street,
as orphaned sons of God
say their prayers and open

the torn primers before
dying hurricane lamps.

Through gaping holes in the roof
the midnight moon would scan your face
and you would be ever installed
on the throne of misery
even after the sun, the moon
the stars and the planets are no more,
even after there is no more history
with its copper plates, inscriptions,
its hired historians, scribes
and the minstrel poets
singing their last panegyrics.

# Affinity

*J.P. Das*

Had I known that London would be so bitterly cold, I would not have come and would have asked for money instead of a plane ticket from the television people. I had expected the English weather to be somewhat more severe than our cold; but the cold here was of a different kind. It got into my skin and flesh and seemed to reach out to my very soul through the marrow of my bones. I did not feel like going out of the house because of the cold and instead of sight-seeing in London, I constantly thought of returning to my village. Besides, what scared me more was Bobby's warning that it would be getting colder still after a few days.

I had been scared stiff of the severe cold the day I landed in Heathrow airport in London. This was my first visit abroad, and my excitement had somewhat paled after the long tiring flight. After the irritating moments with the immigration, I had stepped outisde the airport terminal to be assaulted by the London cold. Bobby was waiting for me outside, but meeting him was no excitement for me at that time; it was a mere consolation.

Bobby had taken me out only a couple of times. Thereafter I stayed put in the heated room and tried to understand this foreign land by what I could see through the window. By about ten, the traffic in the street thinned and I did not know what to do. I looked carefully at the cooking range, the washing machine and the other gadgets and devoted myself to cooking a meal. I was not happy with the rather cold breakfast Bobby made and spent my time cooking an elaborate meal of rice and curry. Though I did not know cooking and did not know the exact amount of salt to put in the curry, I enjoyed my cooking better than Bobby's dishes.

Bobby used to return about five thirty in the evening. Since I was sitting all alone in the house the whole day, Bobby tried to spend the entire evening with me. He used to tell me about this flat of his, which he had rented only six months earlier and which he was planning on leaving in another three months. He was earlier staying in a much smaller flat in a congested area. The present house was not only spacious, but was also located in an open area near a canal and had a small lawn. Bobby would spend hours on the lawn, lying there and doing nothing. The other attraction for Bobby was a piano, which went with the house. Bobby was very happy playing the piano for some time at least every morning and evening.

I had met Bobby Larkin when he had come as the cameraman of a television unit from London who were doing a film on our village. I got involved with them as they needed a doctor for the unit and I was the only doctor in our village. I had become friendly with Bobby when the unit stayed in our village for a few weeks. Bobby was different from the other members of the unit and easily made friends with the villagers. Our villagers, children and old men alike, tried to practice their English on Bobby and Bobby happily listened and talked to them.

From the moment the film unit came to our village, the villagers were divided into two groups. One group supported the unit whereas the other one implied that the crew members were in reality spies who had come to photograph the bridge under the guise of making a film. The supporters argued that they had obtained permission from the Home Ministry and in any case the small bridge over the narrow stream of a river could not be holding any strategic secrets. However, there was always some strife between the two groups, which continued even after the television unit left the village.

The only person who kept out of this feud, though he hung around the unit, was Dhuna Mama. Though he was a distant maternal uncle of mine, Dhuna was only three years older than me. When we were children, Dhuna was two years my senior in school. Then he failed in the exams and came to study with me. After some time he gave up his studies and started running errands in the village to earn a living. He was a little dull in the head, but he was simple and honest and everyone trusted him. His greatest quality was that he was always cheerful, no matter what happened, and none ever saw him in a gloomy mood. When he lost a leg, he could no longer run about, but devoted himself, unasked, to look after the cattle and the children of the village, and this kept him busy as ever.

Dhuna lost his leg quite sometime back. I was a student in the Medical College at that time. One morning we were going round the surgery ward with our Professor when I heard someone call out my name. I looked at the patients, but could not recognise any acquaintance. One of the patients pulled down the blanket from over his head and beckoned me to come to him. When I reached the bed, the patient again covered his head. I pulled down the blanket to discover that it was Dhuna. Dhuna said, "See how I fooled you!" Dhuna had one of his legs amputated above the knee. However, he did not seem to be worried in the least, and before I could sympathise with him for his plight, he said, "I would not have jumped out if I had known that the train was in such a high speed. But the damned ticket checker was after me and would surely have sent me to the jail. Thank God, my right leg was saved".

I felt sorry to see Dhuna loose a leg. He was quite healthy and hale and hearty; now he was doomed to be a cripple for life. What if he had been sent to the jail; at least he would not have lost his leg ; But Dhuna did not appear to be worried in the least. He told me, "Don't tell anyone in my house. I'll be all right in a few days. Would they fit a rubber leg or something?" Before I could say anything, he said, "No, I won't have a rubber leg. Get me nice good staff. Haven't you seen the one-legged beggar who comes to our village. He walks so fast with his staff, you have to run to keep up with him".

Dhuna returned to the village and settled back to his old life as if nothing had happened. He moved about with the help of his staff and got busy again. When the film crew came to the village, Dhuna attached himself to them and though they did not ask him to do anything, he ran errands for them on his own. He became particularly attached to Bobby when he found him to be friendly with the villagers. One day he went upto Bobby and called out to him, "Brother, oh Brother. . . ." Bobby said, "No brother, Bobby, only Bobby." From that time they became friendly. Dhuna told him his name but Bobby could not get it right. After trying Doohna and Duna, Bobby finally decided to call him Mama, after finding out from me what it meant.

The unit members hardly ever came to me for medicine, but I did spend some time with them, watching them at work. It was a boring affair, for it took hours to prepare for the shooting of a few minutes. When the Director went about arranging for the shot, Bobby spent the time going round the village and taking sitll photographs, or sat under the banyan tree on the outskirts of the village, waiting for the director's call. Dhuna would join Bobby during those hours and sit near him or would hop after him and advise him, through gestures and the few English words he knew, about the sights in the village which were worth photographing.

After Bobby photographed the stray dogs, the village deity, the terracotta horses and the burnt tree, they would come back and sit under the banyan tree. Though language was a handicap, they seemed to get along fine. Dhuna would ask Bobby about the various parts of the camera and Bobby would open the camera and explain things to him with great interest. Dhuna apparently understood at least part of what Bobby said, for he sometimes laughed and sometimes became serious.

Sometimes I had to act as the interpreter between Bobby and Dhuna and that is how I discovered their strange friendship. One day Bobby asked me about Dhuna's accident and when I had told him about it, he suggested an artificial leg. Dhuna, who was sitting silently and trying to understand what we were talking about, suddenly became agitated, shook his head and said, "No wooden leg; no rubber leg." Bobby left it at that and never again broached the subject. As long as the unit stayed there, Dhuna clung to Bobby. He would bring puffed rice which Bobby took with great relish. Sometimes, they played a game of ludo, or Dhuna taught him how to wear a loin-cloth or tie a proper head band with the upper cloth that covered his torso.

Dhuna was a curious person and was interested to know about everything Bobby had. He often went through Bobby's bag and scrutinised his equipment, though he did not comprehend what these were. The only thing he could understand was spirit level, which Dhuna knew was only an improved version of the gadget the village mason used. Dhuna would very often place it on his palm and try to get the level right. Sometimes he would remove his head band and try Bobby's cap on or wear the glove and see if it was more comfortable to hold the staff with a gloved hand. Other members of the Unit did not like their things being touched or handled by the villagers, but Bobby gladly suffered Dhuna's curiousity.

The television crew stayed in our village for full fifteen days. Their presence had created some unpleasantness and friction. Some villagers thought that those of us who were working with the unit had made tons of money and this made them envious. Things came to a climax the day a cow fell off the bridge and broke its legs. The police was called, there was quite a commotion, the unit people threatened the police with the letter from the Home Ministry. In the midst of all this furore, only two people were calm. Bobby and Dhuna had been playing ludo under the banyan tree on the outskirts of the village. When the unit finally left, we bade them goodbye near the bridge, but Dhuna got into their jeep and drove some distance with them.

I was happy the day Bobby had come back from his office early, for I was getting rather bored in the house all by myself. Bobby also told me that he was taking a few days' leave so that he could enjoy his stay in the spacious house for the few days playing the piano. He was looking forward to it as if this was one of the best things in his life. Soon after he came from the office, he went to the piano and started playing. I did not understand the music, but was happy to find Bobby so cheerful and excited.

When I came to London, I had thought that Bobby would ask me about Dhuna. He did ask me once, but that was all. Another time, when I spoke to him about Dhuna, he did not seem to be interested. I took it that their friendship in our village was but a passing thing; they had nothing in common. But I also felt at times that Bobby and Dhuna had some common qualities, though I could not figure out what exactly these were.

Happily for me, it was now time to leave London. Being on leave, Bobby had offered to drive me to the airport. My flight was at ten in the morning and I had gone to bed early the night before, having done my packing. But I could not sleep, I had decided to get up early, but I dozed off in the early hours and woke up at seven. It was still dark and misty outside. I collected the milk bottles from the door and started making a cup of tea. Suddenly I heard the piano and was a little surprised for Bobby was a late riser. I made another cup of tea nad took it to Bobby in the next room.

The room lay in darkness and outside, there was as yet no light in the sky. Bobby was at the piano, abstracted. He had a loin cloth on and had tied a headband. Though he was playing a western tune, it seemed to me as if it was a special piece dedicated to Dhuna.

Bobby stopped playing and took the cup of tea. I was by then dressed and ready to leave. Bobby looked at the clock and said, "There is plenty of time." He sipped his tea and added, "It would be one in the afternoon in your country".

I was anxious to get back and Bobby's words reminded me of my village. Yes, it would be one in the afternoon there. It would be bright and sunny. It would be lonely in the temple yard. Cattle would be grazing in the fields outside the village. It would be shady and cool under the banyan tree. Dhuna Mama would be sitting there all by himself. He would be having gloves on his hands and a cap on his head. He would be lost in his thoughts as he gazed at the horizon.

*(Translated from the original Oriya by the author)*

# Book Reviews

**Delhi through the Ages**: (Essays in Urban History, Culture and Society); Edited by R.E. Frykenberg; Oxford University Press; 1986; 524 pages; Rs 230/-

The occasion for this book was the celebration by former students of Percival Spear of over fifty years of the historian's distinguished scholarship devoted to the study of India, through a seminar-workshop held on 31 October and I November 1979, on the campus of Wisconsin-Madison, at which the guru was himself present. Between then and 1982, Spear died, but the project for a book in memory of his scholarship went forward and here it now is in 1986, with formal dedication to him. In addition to those who attended the Spear seminar, others were invited to contribute to the projected volume. The result is a total, if we include a useful Preface by Frykenberg and a chapter on "The Study of Delhi —an Analytical Historiographic Introduction," that appears without name, but that is also probably by Frykenberg, of thirty "essays", some not primarily on Delhi but on their authors' periodic reactions to the changing city.

The Introduction defends the unevenness in contribution with: "The blend of essays included is *deliberately* (my italics) uneven and sundry, both in form and substance". Why deliberately? Because the emphasis and contents of the essays are themselves so varied and because these essays attempt to highlight so many features in Delhi's heritage. A less spurious step would have been to exclude what was not of an expected academic standard or that was so patently personal that it detracted from the scholarly value of such a publication. As it stands, the thirty contributions vary so much in relevance to the main title that, again, someone has to rush in with the sub-title "Essays in Urban History, Culture and Society".

There is, however, some

really good work included such as Percival Spear's "Delhi The Stop — Go Capital : A Summation "and Ainslee T. Embree's excellent analysis of Spear's work, "Percival Spear's Vision — A Bibliographic Note", which I would commend to anyone, scholar or common reader, interested in Spear's distinctive approach to Indian and Delhi history. Frykenberg's own contributions are also most competent.

There are others that, though not quite so central to what one conceives of as a book on the city of Delhi's importance through the ages, yet supply valuable information on its present institutions. Among these are Aparna Basu's "The Foundation and Early History of Delhi University", and Hugh Tinker's "Between Old Delhi and New Delhi : C.F. Andrews and St. Stephen's in an Era of Transition." Nearer the historical centre are such essays as "What Happened to Mughal Delhi — a Morphological Survey" by Samuel V. Noe; "Shahjahanabad : The Mughal Delhi, 1638-1803 — an Introduction" by Hamid Khatoon Naqvi; "Capital of the Sultans : Delhi Through the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries" by M. Akthar Ali; and "On the Proto History of Delhi and Its Environs" by A.K. Narain.

The illustrations are limited to photographs, not very good, supplied by courtesy of Hakim Ajmal Khan's family, and seven plates interspacing Mildred Archer's "Artists and Patrons in 'Residency' Delhi 1803-1858". Though this is better than nothing, it leaves one wondering why they are not more numerous and of better quality for a composite study so far-flung, and so "deliberately" diversified. They recall by contrast Gavin Hambly's "Cities of Moghul India : Delhi, Agra, Fatehpur Sikri", as coffee-table book certainly, *and this one is not*, but with the merit of well-chosen and well-printed photographs that Delhi, notwithstanding its many physical shortcomings today, still deserves.

*Muriel Wasi*

**Martyn Sahib by Mady Martyn :** The story of John Martyn of the Doon School by Mady Martyn; Dass Media, 1985; 247 pages; Rs. 120/-

**C.Y. Chintamani :** Ravindra Nath Verma; National Book Trust, 1986; 83 pages; Rs. 11/-

**The Mahatma And The Netaji :** Two Men of Destiny by Samar Guha; Sterling Publishers Private Ltd., 1986; 244 pages; Rs. 125/-

The Doon School is now part of India's educational history, and institutions of this kind are not infreqently the work of special personalities. A premier Public School on the English pattern, but with the difference that it was tailored from the start to meet the requirements of Free India, the Doon School came into being in September 1935, twelve years before Indian independence.

Many important Indians were responsible for the idea of such a school, but Doon owes its special character and traditions to its first Principal, Arthur Foot, an Englishman interesting for several reasons, but specially because he knew so well what he wanted to make, and with whose assistance this was to be possible.

Mady Martyn's book *Martyn Sahib* is, first, the story of her second husband, John Martyn's life, and only next the story of the Doon School to which Martyn remained wedded all his bachelor years. The man fitted the instituion to which he gave so many years of that life.

The story is told here of Martyn's boyhood and youth in England, but it begins to be of particular interest to Asian readers from the moment that Arthur Foot on a search for a colleague and a housemaster, enquires about John Martyn, then a master at Harrow, and is told : "Oh, he is a good teacher and all that, but a bit disturbing. He is always finding groups of boys who want to do something that is not allowed by school rules, and then starting a society to make it legal". Foot promptly annexed Martyn for Doon.

From which it will be clear that both Foot and Martyn were public schoolmen with a difference. Both believed in the British Public School system, but neither was willing to fall into the mould without asserting a special, and different, identity for himself. There was sufficient of the rebel in both to make them suitable for an essentially diferent country, whose traditions they would respect and whose culture they would work to understand.

Mady Martyn's story is always readable and interesting for its human curiosity but it is the story of the man, John Martyn, who was also her husband, and we must expect her to see life at Doon through Martyn's eyes. There is a certain amount of implied partisanship for which she does not, and indeed need not, apologise. She tries to be objective; cites various opinions besides her husband's; turns her searchlight as biographer over the school's masters and housemasters, its parents and students; and gives us a fairly vivid portrait of the life of both of those who made the community of learning, and of the crossection of Indians society from which its students and parents were drawn. Inevitably this represents for India as a whole an urban minority of some affluence, but it is still fundamentally Indian and, as she, maintains, is habituated to think in integrated Indian terms submerging its centrifugal tendencies in the concept of Indian nationhood.

When Foot left in 1948, and John Martyn took over as headmaster, only the man changed, not the ethos of the school or the manner of its administration. Yet, as Mrs Martyn points out, Martyn and Foot were very different people, the former "full of ideas", the latter with "the determination and the powerful personality to enforce exacting standards and carry through experiments that were new and therefore suspect". Foot, as the author freely acknowledges, was a natural pioneer, as man who set precedents. He was high-principled, dry-humoured and, beneath a stern exterior, deeply kind. Foot was a worrier ; Martyn more tranquil, more self-contained.

But when Martyn took over as Headmaster in 1948, he did not have to pattern himself on anyone. In a very short time he had established himself as his own man, and the boys learnt to take this new Head seriously. He had his own forms of discipline. His passion for mountaineering continued. He was democratic and a strong believer in social work on behalf of the underprivileged. His tenure as Headmaster was marked by his own individuality. And so "Martyn Sahib" earned his special place in the annals of the school.

There is sufficient reason to bring out a biography on Chintamani at a time when the prestige of editors is often dimmed by their too-easy acquiescence in the wishes of their proprietors. Chintamani made history by his rugged independence as editor, and his uncompromising stand against men in high places, not excluding governors and viceroys. He knew where he stood politically — a liberal committed to constitutional advance. He was therefore openly critical of Gandhiji's unorthodox methods of winning independence, and end to which Chintamani was just as committed. And though, as time went on this tended to remove the Allahabad Editor from the mainstream of Indian politics, Chintamani continued to be admired and respected for his pronouncements in *The Leader* on which he conferred distinction for over 20 years.

Mr Ravindra Nath Verma's small biography is well documented and fortunately contatins as an appendix, samples of Chintamani's leaders in *The Leader*. They are hard-hitting and characterful and this would seem to be the point of the biography. The book also pays high tribute to Chintamani's enormous capacity for work, his mastery of fact and detail, his conversational powers and the ease with which he could speak and write at short notice on difficult political and legal issues. All this is well established.

However, it is a pity that Mr Varma expends himself so much on adulation and so little on healthy criticism. For much as we admire Chintamani even in 1986, we suspect that he, like his eminent contemporaries, had feet of clay. The business of biography is to re-create a man in his total humanity, warts and all, so as to eliminate the distance that divides him from us. Mr Varma's Chintamani tends to remain a distant, if heroic, figure.

As the Indian National Movement recedes into history, we must expect more and more re-assessment of its leaders, No serious commentator would deny that both Mahatma Gandhi and Netaji Subhas Bose were patriots. Equally, no one would attempt to deny today that though they shared the objective of an India free of British or any other foreign rule, they differed strongly as to the means used to encompass their end.

Looking back there would seem to have been for some years an imperfect sympathy between these two Indian patriots. Gandhi freely admitted that he had worked to prevent Bose from continuing as President of the Indian National Congress. But after Bose's escape from India, his organisation of the Indian National Army and 1942, when Gandhi decided to lead the "Quit India" movement against the British, then at war, the distance between the two men perceptibly narrowed. That is how Samar Guha sees it, and he documents his case well. As Gandhiji grew more and more insistent on immediate independence for India during World War II, he appears to have felt some of the urgency that Bose had always felt on this subject. This view is supported by Louis Fischer in his interview with Gandhi at the time. From having been a "problem" earlier, because he had advocated violent revolution, Bose now became in Gandhi's words "a patriot of patriots".

With time and distance we see both men more clearly. That is the advantage of history — that it confers perspectives. Mr Samar Guha has contributed to this, and though he is often partisan, being strongly supportive of Bose, his book is likely to add to the raw material that makes the history of the Indian National Revolution.

*Muriel Wasi*

**Truth-Tales:** Contemporary Writing by Indian Women; Published by kali for Women; 1986; 207 pages; Rs. 45/-

In the last five years we have seen and read much more writing by Indian women than in the previous twenty. This is not an accident. In the first place, more Indian women are now better educated than they were, and more ready to commit themselves to writing to bear testimony to their experience. Second, women are now more immediately relevant as a theme for writing: they are observed, discussed, agreed or disagreed upon and spotlighted by the media as a subject of national and or regional concern. Finally, the new young writers who record their own or borrowed experiences, are sufficiently good to be brought "to book". And so editors and publishers are on the alert for good wrting on Indian women by Indian women.

*Truth-Tales* is by any standard, Indian or world, a competent piece of publishing. The editors (for they must have existed) are not named, so we may infer that the seven stories as published came more or less directly from the minds and pens of their authors and translators. Only one of the seven was originally written in English; the others in order of appearance are translations from Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Hindi, Tamil and Urdu. The publisher's note makes it clear that the discovery of these contemporary stories has not been easy. They have had to be located, translated and obtained for publication, and the other necessary procedures gone through before this small book appeared. Among the most exactig of these intermediate steps must have been selection. For short stories of all kinds on women by women abound in Indian weekend papers and periodicals. The publishers were anxious to publish work that implied important questions such as: How did the women themselves see such writing? Was it central to their lives? Was there a connection between such writing and its writers' political involvement? What were the women's concerns and what the nature of their creative energy?

All these were ambitious and unusual questions and aims, and Kali for Women is to be congratulated on enunciating them and following them up. It would have been easy to produce a volume of stories of such well-known women writers in English as Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal or Rama Mehta, or translations from Amrita Pritam. But the Indian, and perhaps even the foreign reader is sufficiently well acquainted with their work. What was more relevant for anyone interested in the problems and development of Indian women today was something much more genuinely contemporary and more compelling because its range was wider in socio-economic and psychological terms. This small volume provides us with precisely this kind of relevant food for thought.

If I were to grade the stories on their excellence *as stories*, it would be as follws: (i) *The Dolls* (Marathi) by Suniti Aphale (2) *Tiny's Granny* (Urdu) by Ismat Chughtai (3) *Muniyakka* (Tamil) by Lakshmi Kannan (4) *Midnight Soldiers* (English) by Vishwapriya Iyengar (5) *Smoke* (Gujarati) by Ila Mehta (6) *The Wet Nurse* (Bengali) by Mahasveta Devi and (7) *Tragedy, in a Minor Key* (Hindi) by Mrinal Pande.

A word about each. *The Dolls* is about a craftswoman who, though exploited for her exceptional skill, cherishes the dependence of others upon her; *Tiny's Granny* is a sort of parable — it ends on a celestial symbol — and is akin in its way to *Ma Parker*; *Muniyakka* is a portrait of a traditional but very spirited woman of the people; *Midnight Soldiers* — a very "mod" narrative, a story of christian fisherfolk; *Smoke* is a study in generation-gap, between a widowed woman doctor of today and her conventinal mother-in-law; *The Wet Nurse*, the story of a woman who, having borne a large family of children, then acts as wet nurse to others and "sees the whole world as her nurseling;" *Tragedy, in a Minor Key*, is about an undergraduate who is not doing too well at college and returns to her family for the vacation.

As all the stories are for some reason worth reading, the difference in quality between (1) and (7), as I grade them, is not as wide as it might be. Nevertheless there is alway some unevenness in collections. I believe there would be few critics in any part of the world who would not rank *The Dolls* very high indeed for its subtlety, authenticity and the curious questions it raises as to what women in India exist for.

All seven stories deal with one or other facet of the exploitation to which Indian women have always more or less been subject, generally by men, but not exclusively by them. Sometimes the exploiters are other women. Sometimes the heroines are predominantly mothers and have willy-nilly to meet the nagging needs of importunate children. Sometimes the exploiters are social groups composed of both men and women in the shape of employers, but everywhere a heroine, young, middleaged, ageing or old, appears to be accountable to someone other than herself. She has no real freedom, no course that she can chart exclusively for herself, in accordance with her own private wishes. Perhaps this is not peculiar to India: women have had the worse end of the life-stick in practically every part of the world, but the emphasis in India has been consistent. A woman's body, a woman's special skills, a woman's craving to keep her children alive, a woman's determination to keep her head above poverty, to ensure food for herself and her dependants, one of them a drunken or feckless husband — all these are subject to exploitation. Even where the heroine is a teenager at college, as in *Tragedy, in a Minor Key,* she is a bundle of irritations, full of querulousness on why this is so or that is not so, and she is entirely credible. The notion that any woman in these seven stories is the complete, serene creature that romantic literature would have us believe she is intended to be, is easily challenged and almost as easily disproved. In short, it is not easy to be a woman.

The stories are interesting, too, for the light they throw on the regions from which they emanate. Putting them together — though they are regionally incomplete — to make a cultural whole, the reader forms some idea of the wide diversity of class, lifestyle, strengths, attitudes and concerns of Indian women today. And from this as yet incomplete kaleidoscope, he/she will understand how women live, love and die in this sub-continent. Kali for

Women has moved, and is moving in the right direction, and is to be congratulated on its insight and determination.

*Muriel Wasi*

# indian horizons

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# Mahabharata Updated

*Sisirkumar Ghose*

We *are* it, someone has said about the Mahabharata. An irrefragable influence on the Indian psyche and culture, the book has rarely been studied as literature, as the working of a poet's mind, in this case the incredible Vyasa. The re-shaping of the most diverse material, from folklore, beast fable to high myth and metaphysics and sociology, the originality has been hard to beat or to grasp. Here comes one who has been at it for decades. Krishna Chaitanya's powerful re-reading is characteristic and bound to be controversial. The two books, *The Mahabharata* and *Gita for Modern Man* comprise a confession of faith and a map of his mind.

He begins with the poet's profile, the shaping imagination that could turn a tribal warfare into a national epic, a world classic, a parable of glory and shame, but almost always alive. The vitality of the structure is amazing. He points to the speed of its action, the energy of the intellect, the virile scansion, the vignettes, the prime metaphor, the plot, the characters. Its sights and sounds have acquired a timeless quality. Think of a flight of cranes against the stormy sky as a backdrop for Arjuna, the hope of the Pandavas. Or the battle itself heaving like an ocean at the rise of the moon. Who can forget the rage and pathos of Draupadi? Or the nobler lament of the Queen-Mother, Gandhari? It is when he speaks of these things that Krishna Chaitanya seems to be more himself than when he tries to hold forth. For all his reading, easy to detect, he remains the bright college boy, his great head full of quotations. There is a tension in him, between the *rasika* and the *pandit*. The onto-theology he had to acquire, the sensitivity he was born with.

He draws our attention most to the portrait gallery. The vacillating Dhritarashtra, with a tacit complicity in the crime; but in his moments of truth aware of his own self-deception. As Krishna Chaitanya has it: "Ripeness is all comes to him only when he is dying." With his facility to feel frustrated, Duryodhana is not the stuff of mature villainy; yet he has no inhibition in following courses of action suggested by others, the arson plot, for instance. His dying speech that he has been killed by treachery has an unconscious irony. Krishna Chaitanya brands him, in uptodate medical terms, as a manic-depressive type. Both father and son defy the deity within, possibly the underlying theme of the poem. Bhishma, the great knight, implacable in his vow and valour, has his lapses, or uneasy moments. To Draupadi's anxious query, he remains curiously silent. But when occasion demands it, he can flare up : "While I am living who else has the power of the realm ?" Strange character, sandwiched between duty and conviction. His last gift of wisdom, on statecraft, to the Pandavas, is an unmatched mature essay in civilisation.

Among transformers of predicament Krishna Chaitanya places Karna and Yudhisthira, each unforgettable in his own way. But was it necessary to add, *a la* Ortega y Gasset, that Karna wins a place for himself in "the scheme of things" ? As for Yudhisthira, he has his weaknesses and Vyasa does not approve of him wholly. The enhancement of his character remains a marvel of literary art.

It is, however, the women who steal the show. The chapter on "A Triad of Great Women", Draupadi, Kunti and Gandhari, is one of the best. The reasons must be that in talking of them Krishna Chaitanya, forgetting to be modern, speaks from the heart, without ideological asides (and without depending on his standby, the western critics). The older women stand out, Gandhari more than the rest. That such a mother should have — but for Vikarna — such children !

After the characters he singles out the main episodes : "the dice game and the dramatic dress rehearsal" at Virat. But how is it that the "dress rehearsal" lacks the resonance of Kurukshetra? The problem of force may not be avoided and the legitimacy of war is at the centre of the Gita, its "top view from the peaks". A brilliant beginning, the focus is now turned on the Gita. If the Mahabharata is the essence of the four Vedas, is not the Gita the essence of the Mahabharata ?

## II

In a private conversation Krishna Chaitanya had told me the Gita would be a sort of summing up, a testament. And so it is : firm, fresh translations, flanked by characteristic commentaries (with splendid support from works of art, old and new). Actually, Krishna Chaitanya is trying to re-create it. The sense of urgency and personal involvement is unmistakable. He has lived with the Gita and, work of a lifetime, the book has all his plus and minus points, a total seriousness and an excessive reliance on his wide reading. It is for the readers to judge if the two match.

There have been verieties of Gita in the past — ascetic, philosophic, reactionary, nationalistic, devotional, as Gospel of Work, even a pacifist Gita. So why not a modern Gita? Of course 'modern' is a heavily loaded term and much will depend on how it is defined or described. So far as Krishna Chaitanya is concerned, he has his dilemma, he would like to keep both science and existentialism, factors here to mediate.

Not averse to polemics, he has a standing quarrel with Shankaracharya for his *mayavadin* interpretation, which he rejects. The battle is too real to be wished away. The Mahatma's idea of an allegory was little more than a personal equation, an indefensible attempt at self-justification. Right action calls for right thinking. Otherwise the clarification of motive and existence, a battle within a battle, the expository agon would make little sense. Action may not be the whole of life but it is part of it. Neither Krishna nor Arjuna is a world-renouncing sannyasi. The Gita more than Milton justifies the ways of God to man. Underlying the teaching is an I-You, a man-deity relationship to fulfil the cosmic intention. The work is therapeutic. Krishna teaches Arjuna, and through him us, how and why to be free and then to fight. Krishna has no sympathy for Arjuna's ignorant, Un-Arya sentimental self-pity, the pose of a conscientious objector. In his situation not to fight would be the worse sin. The unity of the Triple Paths marks a superior intelligence at work. That such a long, expository dialogue could take place — if it did — on a battlefield shows that dialogue is not a Greek or western monopoly. In Krishna Chaitanya's words, it is "the timeless dialogue in which the man of every age has to participate". The Gita, an Indian *Summa Theologiae*, is for ever contemporary.

This Krishna, that is Vyasa, is anything but traditional, with a capital T. A transvaluer of values, he changes many existing concepts and institutions, such as *Tyaga, Yoga, Tapah, Sannyasa, Nirvana, Shastra, Svadhyaya*. Samkhya and Yoga get modified. The positing of the Supreme Person, Purushottama and a Higher Nature (*Para Prakriti*) makes possible the action of the free, *muktasya karma*. This is a liberating idea, of a revolution from above, *cetasa*, by consciousness, far beyond the red-in-tooth-and-claw revolutions of our times. If only Mao and Marx had read the Gita!

Krishna's route to telos through ontology allows the argument, more so Krishna Chaitanya, a modern opening. And yet the Gita's culmination in sacrifice and surrender is no less marvellous and memorable. The defender of dharma knows when all dharmas are to be abandoned. Krishna is a master of beyonding, a balanced beyonding. Blending logic with magic, his ambivalence is endless. The a-logical *visvarupa* has a logic or place of its own. Before that mystery, a blend of reason and revelation, we are all Newtons collecting pebbles of *psychologia perennis.*

To refashion reality and to be responsible to the race is the task of Everyman. How many perform it? Krishna Chaitanya is an exception proving the rule. As he defines and exemplifies it, "an integration of knowledge from the physics of matter to the psyche of man to recover certitude" (*astikya*) is man's major task today. In India the model must be Vyasa. As Vyasa had created Krishna in his own image, Krishna Chaitanya has created his own Vyasa. The escalation of Krishna, he says, was a daring strategy of Vysas. His escalation of himself on a par with Vyasa is no less daring. The voice of Krishna is at times drowned by the voice of Krishna Chaitanya! The bold empathy — *toujours l' audace*! — cannot but impress.

In the attempt to give a new look to an old text sometime he may have gone a little too far. Not that there is anything implausible in finding existential strains in the Gita. Arjuna's *vishad yoga* has something of *Angst* and shipwreck about it. What is wrong is the way he stresses it, by quoting Roszak on Schumacher. Said Roszak: "It is naive to summon to self-knowledge without acknowledging that the deepest self-knowledge of our times begins in the expressing of radical absurdity and abandonment". Now who is being naive?

The extra-modern bias has its reverse side: the total neglect of (perhaps less modern than him) Indian commentators, many of them more deeply rooted and not less intelligent or concerned. Why, while quoting all kinds of western authors, he would not mention Tilak, Anirvan or Sri Aurobindo passeth understanding. Are all his friends and mentors 'phoren'?

His Mahabharata was more of a literary study, the *Gita for Modern Man* less so. He calls it a poem but does not explore the poetry. Not that he fails to notice the indirect narration through reportage or the array of arguments not untouched by an undercurrent of emotion. But in the main the thrust is soteriological. He is so taken up with solving the universe that aesthetics, his strong point, is more or less left aside. The reference to the playful god (*deva kridakarastatra bhava daivi*) occurs only in passing. And yet the Gita has a playful tone, one almost smells the smile of Krishna, *prahasana iva*. For all the gravity of discourse, Lord Krishna more than Hamlet and Lear is gay. The literary study of the Gita awaits its critic. We can but make a few suggestions. Even a glance is enough to reveal that it belongs to the literature of crisis, what we now know as the literature of extreme situations. It is at the same time the story of a conversion, a guided initiation which shows an insider's knowledge of worldly realities as well as the esoteric side of life. Yet, with its incomparably virile, male intellectuality, it is a daylight open-air miracle. Even the Vision of the Lord, one of the most astounding descriptions of the deity, has no penumbra about it. Is not the book basically mystical ? The whole of Veda and the Upanishads flow through it, not only the doctrine but the very phrases. His eyes fixed on the salvation theatre, Krishna Chaitanya hasn't the time for its idiom, the tone, the metaphors for the Gita as a work of art. The thesis is also an artefact. Few were better equipped to deal with this aspect than the author of *Sanskrit Poetics.*

Krishna Chaitanya feels sure that the Gita was not an interpolation, but an original part of the epic. Is there not a problem here ? The Gita may end optimistically, but does the Mahabharata ? The final lament of Vyasa — "with arms upraised I cry, no one listens to me, to the words of dharma" — tells another tale. The epic ends as an elegy. The last flare of a heroic age, is the poetry in the pity ? Is disillusionment the last word, the bitter fruit, of civilization ? Where is Dharmarajya ? Or is history one graveyard merging into another ?

Be that as it may, the Gita's relevance remains. As Krishna Chaitanya puts it, "it shows the path of redemption and alerts us against the path of annihilation". Shorn of theology, the Gita's message is perhaps simple : to be free, to act as a free person, one has to go within. Not inaction, but the consciousness with which action is done is what matters. Today "the time for decision is terribly short".

This elite exercise, its price will keep it out of the reach of most readers, an impressive document could start a national debate. But Delhi — not far from Kurukshetra ! — being what it is, this is unlikely. However if it is the purpose of a project to aid self-realisation, the two books succeed greatly. He has poured his whole life, emotional and intellectual, into it. Virtually he has become his own Vyasa. If he were to say "I am it", there will be little to wonder or to object. Of course to make the Gita new may not be the same as making it 'modern'. The Gita is not only modern but also, one hopes, post-modern.

The two books are witness to an intense intellectual and imaginative activity. He has made us relive the old drama that is still the same, Good versus Evil, *devasura yuddha.* As atomic dust settles on the horizon and an end-of-the-world mood spreads from pole to pole, and a civilization waits for its viaticum, the Gita comes like the eye of the storm, burning bright. The dialogue changes into a monologue, the inner war without escape, the fate of modern men.

The heavens are empty. Towards the end Krishna Chaitanya makes a fresh but pertinent, uptodate point. It may hurt the popular idea of the Avatar born again and again. The disinherited, modern man must fend for himself. Raise the self by the self. According to his existential exegesis, "slowly but steadily, the focus is shifting from deity, never seen in flesh and blood in the world, to man himself, who can be inspired by him to reveal the latter's reality in his own freely aligned role in history". Maybe God is never more present than when *deus absconditus.* He can be bound neither by faith nor by thought.

Two cheers for Krishna Chaitanya :*

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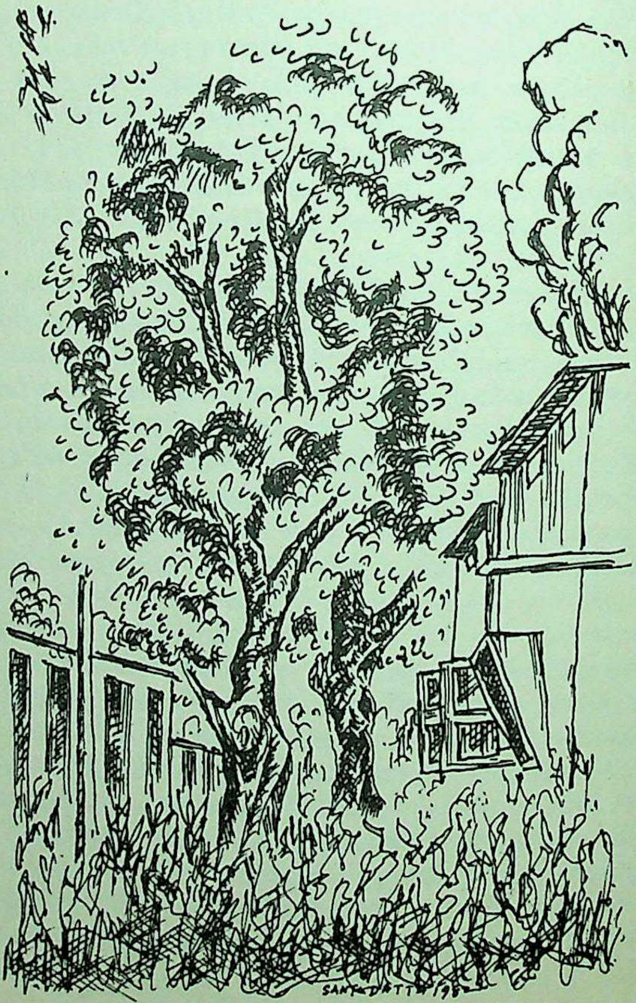
* *The Mahabharata. A Literary Study.* Krishna Chaitanya. Clarion Books. 1985. Pp. 462. Rs. 175.

*Gita for Modern Man.* Krishna Chaitanya. Clarion Books. 1986. Pp. 256. Rs. 255.



# Arts and the State

*Nissim Ezekiel*

The first assumption of this background paper for our discussion of The State in relation to the Arts, including the Media, is that the State we have in mind is democratic in every sense of the word. Whatever its weaknesses and faults, whatever the condition of the economy and the distortions of the social relations, the Government that represents it must be democratically elected and replaced, dependant at all times on the process broadly described as democratic. If it is a dictatorship, even that of a Party and not of an individual, what it does for the arts and the concessions it makes to the media are of no interest to me.

My second assumption is that the State, and the Government which temporarily exercise power in its name, is not identical with Society and culture. At its best, a Government is only one expression of Society and Culture; it cannot, therefore and should not speak in their name. It is a practical necessity and an instrument of a people's will. When it tries to manipulate that will, it has already begun to betray it and to imply that the Government has some transcendent historic mission. Democrats who concede that claim do so because they have sub-consciously abandoned their faith in the people. They hope and dream that a handful of individuals with supreme power will accomplish for the people what the people themselves seem incapable of accomplishing on their own.

My third assumption about Government and the State, which is the last I shall mention to avoid making this a purely political argument, is that the standards and principles by which a Government has to be judged are ultimately humane, not ideological. I believe in some perennial human values which matter or ought to matter more than specific political, economic and social policies. I reject the way of thinking about history which attaches equal importance to positive and negative effects of decisions and actions by those in power.

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To illustrate what I mean. I quote from a recent review of a book entitled *Rethinking The Soviet Experience: Politics and History Since 1917* by Stephen F. Cohen (OUP, New York).

(1) "The systematic murder of millions should not be justified or blurred but the modernisation which took place afterwards should also be noted. This is how Cohen wants Soviet studies to proceed".

(2) "Stalin's was a desperate attempt to cope with the social crisis created by his leadership. But though he annihilated millions, millions of others gained in one way or the other. He found adherents to his policy in those who were elevated in the party or state set-up". (*The Times of India*, June 1, 1986).

It would be a waste of time to analyse the proposition that while some left or right wing Government persecuted and imprisoned thousands of writers and artists, thousands of others received substantial grants for writing poetry and novels or painting portraits and landscapes which contributed greatly to the enrichment of the nation's Culture. I want to say clearly and firmly that I am not in favour of that kind of cultural enrichment, which is in fact a mockery of culture.

If my assumptions are accepted, the question is what a democratic and humane Government should do for the arts, and how, what its relationship should be to the media and why. Let me deal now with the first part of that problem, which is considerably less difficult and controversial than the other.

It is virtually impossible for a Government in our times to do absolutely nothing for the arts. At the very least it would find itself maintaining the commitment to art-education institutions made by its predecessors. This may be less out of interest in art than in education. In addition, there would be academies of arts and letters as well as prizes from trust funds. But a particular Government may not agree to extend its responsibilities in these areas. Should it be persuaded to do so ? My answer is Yes, provided it does not mean a series of mechanical gestures to meet popular or elitist demands, with no grasp of the real issues and no concern for the existing involvement in the arts. Generosity is good to start with but one can anticipate a number of financial and administrative disasters, given the prevailing attitudes to public funds, expensive inquiries into these disasters followed by reports which are then ignored, more disasters, more inquiries and more reports which are again ignored.

This prospect raises larger questions than those strictly relevant to State support for the Arts, but they ought not to be ignored. In the long run, the Arts are discredited in the process, and among artists themselves individuals raise their voices against it. The benefits go to the mediocre and to a new breed of literary and art bureaucrats, as they may be called, whose contribution to culture is often either minimal or wholly negative. There is no real leadership, no effective role for ideas but only a tremendous waste of money, time and energy. What is created is only a facade of institutions, journals and projects, which function without raising standards, without facing the formidable challenges of our time and place. We can identify the areas where State support is provided as in the case of museums or art schools, but nothing supremely valuable happens in them.

I must add that on these grounds it is still a mistake to discount the work being done and to demand a return to an earlier condition. The constructive way is to keep up a criticism of State-supported ventures of all kinds, to explore their possibilities, to remind ourselves of their larger, profounder purposes in relation to society and culture, to build up the pressures so that ultimately more is gained in terms of those ideals which remain meaningful in the midst of persistent failures.

The responsibility for the failure of State-sponsored art-institutions must be shared by Society and culture. I must admit that such a sharing may lead eventually to despair, when it appears that nothing and nobody can make a State-apparatus sensitive. But private enterprise is not a viable substitute, particularly in a Third World country such as ours. In a recent interview, Shashi Kapoor complained bitterly that he had offered to pay the Government 30 crores of Rupees annually for a total take-over of Doordarshan's channel 2, but the Government had rejected the offer. I hope all of you will agree that the Government was quite right. Unfortunately, it cannot conceive of the alternative that would really make a difference. It wants to run channel 2 as it runs channel 1, in the manner all Government departments are run.

The alternative I have in mind is a State-sponsored but autonomous body, which implies a whole way of thinking about politics, society, education, the arts and the media, separately as well as collectively. I would not like to suggest that it is the final answer to the problems we are going to discuss but I do insist that it is a step in the right direction. Just as one of the three fundamental assumptions I stated in the beginning was that the State referred to in our subject is democratic and humane, whatever its weaknesses, so also I now assume that both State-sponsorship and autonomy are essential in the contemporary world if support to the arts is to be on the required scale.

And that proposition immediately faces us with the delicate and complex question : What is the scale of support that would be considered adequate. Is there any such fixed scale, and can it be kept under control? By what yardsticks do we measure the public funds allotted to the arts compared to those for other purposes?

I quote in this context from *The Culture Gap: An Experience of Government and the Arts* by Hugh Jenkins, Minister for the Arts in Britain for two years, 1974—1976 (London, Marion Boyars, 1979).

"The needs of the Arts Council increased at a much greater rate than its grant and the more money it received the hungrier it became for still greater resources."

The figures mentioned by Mr Jenkins are: "£ 350,000 in 1946/47 and in 1977/78 over £ 50 millions". This resulted in what Mr Jenkins ironically refers to as "a novel concept of government dependence", since the report for 1953-54 declared that even if only half-a-million pounds were withdrawn from the available public money for the arts, "nearly all the national institutions of music and drama in this country would have to close down" (P. 41 and 44).

It is that kind of situation which should now be anticipated and avoided by those who believe as I do, in State support for the arts. Mr. Jenkins makes two positive points about the relationship between the State and the Arts during his time in the late seventies, and the foundation for it laid in the preceding decades. One is that though the actual achievement fell far short of its ideals, "the groundwork was laid for an unprecedented involvement of government in the arts". The other point is that successive Governments kept their promise of not interfering with Arts Council decisions, of not giving orders or even advice in specific cases. That would be too much to expect in our country. So we have even stronger reasons for moderation and discrimination in advocating schemes for Government support to the arts. Taking my cue from the Policy statement in Mr Jenkin's book, I would advocate maximum funding for the first two out of the three heads under which Government support to the arts may be grouped i.e. education and preservation, and the minimum for the third, i.e., patronage.

I would like to mention the fact that for most people interested in it, only the patronage counts. Expenditure and effort under the other heads is takn for granted, and the Government gets no credit for it. If an arts school is subsidised, everyone, including its students, staff and administrators consider it merely one of the unquestionable obligations of the Government, and it has truly become so. On the other hand, prizes, awards, research grants, etc. are appreciated as expressions of genuine involvement in the arts by the Party in power, and these are sometimes multiplied till they lose virtually all their prestige.

There is also a distinction to be made between support to the arts for the sake of artists and similar support for the sake of the people, for the sake of a Society and its Culture. Carrying out an Arts Policy in terms of the former is comparatively easy, and is often confined, unintentionally, to regional capitals and other urban centres. The beneficiaries are the educated and the comparatively affluent. Popularising art calls for an altogether different kind of effort.

I shall confine myself to a few comments on that concept, which has nothing to do with artistic and literary works already or potentially popular, a best-selling novel, theatrical or filmic entertainments that draw full houses. Nor does it call for forcing obscure modern poetry or *avant – garde* abstractions down the throats of the unwilling masses. There is a popular art which is the creation of the people and of which they are not mere consumers. But to ask that popular art, even in this superior sense, should be popularised by the Government would be pointlessly paradoxical.

To put it briefly and simply, the function of the Government is to do everything in its power to strengthen the presence of the arts and to make it accessible in the interests of the whole community. It must not control or dominate the scene, nor make the flourishing of the arts dependent on its support. It must only promote and assist, encouraging the community for its own sake and not for the sake of the artists to integrate them in its normal, day-to-day consciousness. For an artist, as Charles Morgan once put it "is neither the community's priest nor the community's slave, but a member of it who holds in his special charge certain qualities essential to its spiritual life. He is, as it were, the breath of the people's imagination without which they perish... " (From "The Artist in the Community" in *Liberties of the Mind*, Macmillan 1951).

A democratic Government may be persuaded to treat the arts as a Gentleman should, so to speak. But it is unlikely to feel the same way about newspapers and journals, radio and television.

The press in India has a heritage, in the first place, very different from that of AIR and Doordarshan, which have been State monopolies from the start. There is no prospect of these two mass media becoming totally independent of the Government, and the Opposition parties which promise that today may behave in power very much as the present Government does. Since these media will not, in the foreseeable future, take the form of public service corporations, the crucial question is : how can the relationship between them and the Government be liberalised ?

I do not have an elaborate policy and strategy in mind, only a few ideas. What we have today is a set-up which is incapable of responding to public interest needs. If public pressure creates intermediary and advisory committees with the intention of co-operating with AIR and Doordarshan, effectively finding answers to the specific demands of the critics, there may be some prospect of an improvement in actual performance.

What I am suggesting is a Think Tank with an executive wing: the functions of which may be clearly defined as assisting and not merely criticising. It would not have any authority to start with, and even no influence, but ought to be committed to *creating* authority and influence in its mode of functioning. No doubt, this would be a lengthy and arduous process, yet well worth undertaking if we face the fact that there are no short cuts in this business.

I propose that we re-consider the fixed and rigid relationships prevailing at present between the Government and AIR-Doordarshan on the one hand and between the latter and the general public. If both sets of relationships can be made more informal, sensitive and constructive, three key-words in my argument, we need not despair at the failure of a persistent dream, which is of total autonomy for the two media we are discussing. It is true many involved and concerned individuals as well as groups will not give up that dream, and neither do I. An ideally free and democratic society eventually must have autonomous broadcasting and television institutions just as it must have a free press. But what should we do until we arrive at that stage ? Is it not realistic to get what we can now, in the most persuasive way we can conceive of, so that the public may reap the benefits immediately instead of waiting for a decade or two ?

I am aware that my hypothetical scheme has its limitations. It will not solve the central issues of Government domination and censorship, of objective and disinterested news reporting, of political and personal favouritism in the planning of programmes. What it could achieve is a livelier, more organic, more complex relationship between AIR-Doordarshan and the public, a relationship that will be acceptable to any democratic Government whatever its particular social and economic credo. The Think Tank and its co-operation with AIR-Doordarshan does not exclude a suitable role for radicals, activists and reviewers who may want to campaign for nothing less than a drastic change in the system.

The all-or-nothing champions generally get nothing, and when they get all it turns out to be very different in practice from what it is in theory. There are hosts of teachers and educational administrators in our country, and no doubt elsewhere, who stand for revolutionary changes in the system but cannot be persuaded to make their teaching more interesting or their administration more efficient and considerate. I think we could move a few steps forward in education as in other areas if we experimented with our own ideas within the constraints of the system without compromising with it or considering it impossible to change. I hope I will not be misunderstood as recommending a soft-line towards the *status quo.* I feel that one's critical view of it should not serve as an excuse for inaction.

The general approach which I have described obviously requires flexible application, as do all general approaches in their relevant context. No easy comparisons can be made between the film-world and the theatre-world, between literature and the press, radio-television and education. But if our starting-point and our fundamental principles are democratic, liberal and humane, we should be able to make appropriate recommendations. They are hardly worth making if the difficulties of translating them into practice are not anticipated and dealt with in some detail.*

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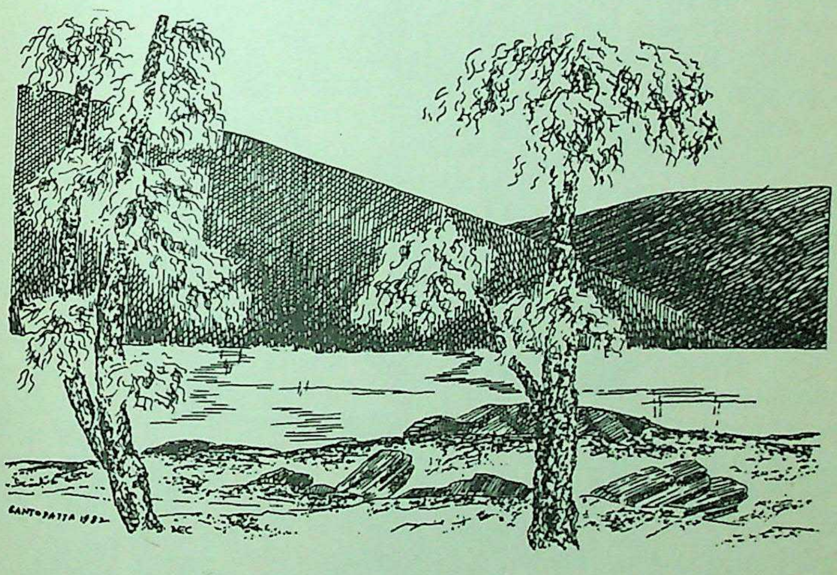
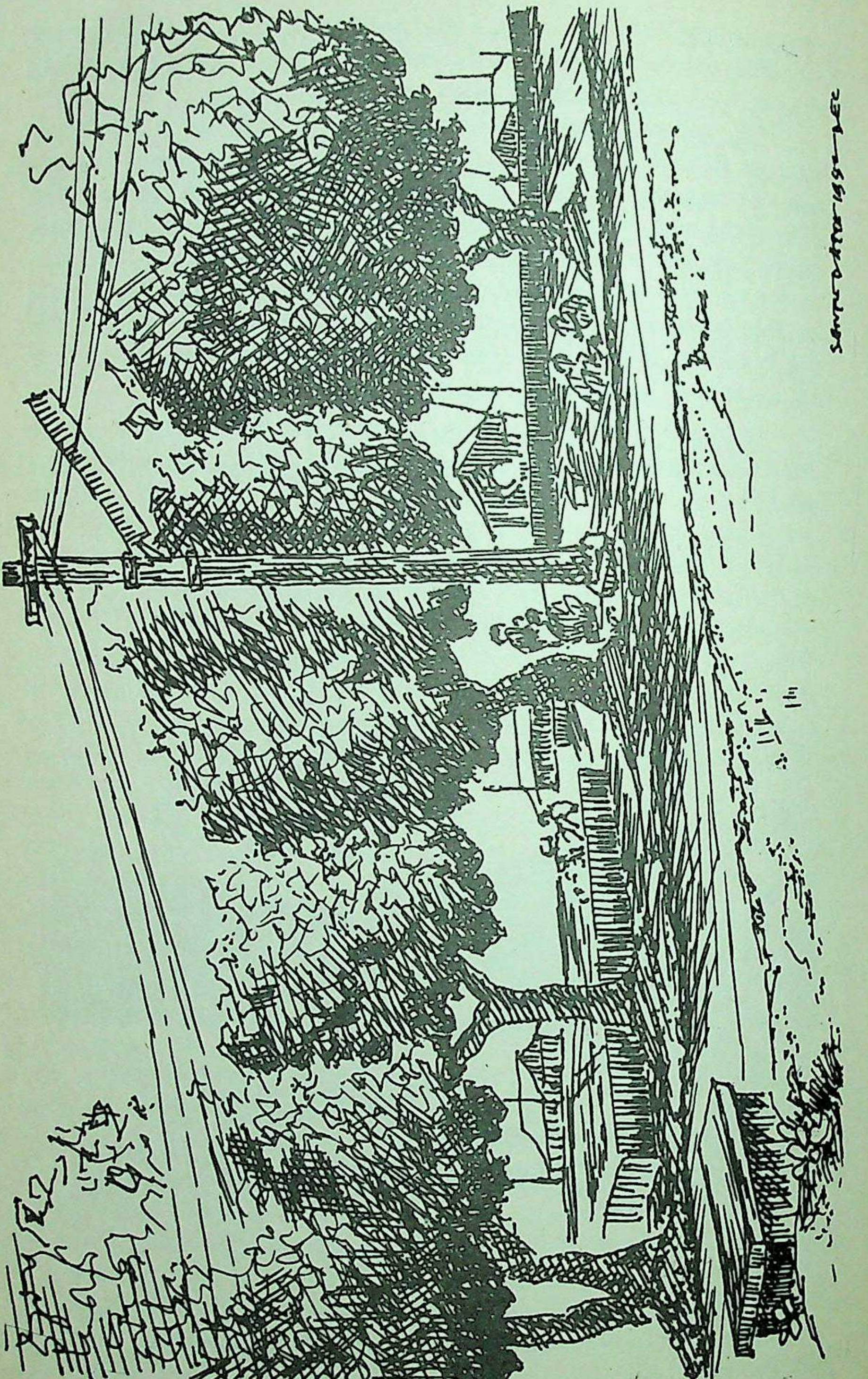
*Based on a paper presented at a seminar, "the Arts & Letters and the State", in Goa, 1986.





# Confessional Poetry as Social Commentary

## A View of English Poetry by Indian Women Poets

*Keki Daruwalla*

The human condition being what it is, no alibis are needed for the tragic muse. The consciousness of our short-lived existence, the awareness of death, the inadequacies of flesh and impulse to live upto ideal codes, the remorselessness of individual destinies, sometimes positively malign, necessarily make for a tragic vision. The buffeting a sensitive human being takes from his environment does not help matters. While opinions may differ, a strong case can be made out against the century we are living in. It could add a shade or two of black to an already dark vision of history. It has seen Auschwitz and Hiroshima, two world wars, and the genocide of the Jew, the Armenian and the Cambodian. And even as the world shrinks, it has become a hostage to terrorism. For the first time we are seeing carnage of the bystander and the innocent. Moreover the century cowers in the shadow of a nuclear war or a nuclear accident. We are, if one sees it that way, in the darker of the dark ages.

How and where does woman poetry come into all this ? What have Kamala Das and company to do with the atom bomb or Chernobyl ? The answer in part would be so simple that it could sound simplistic : The female condition lays claim to half the human condition. Whether it is unrequited love or the ingratitude of children, or male exploitation, it is as much a part of human or literary reality as Oedipus being hounded to his doom.

Men and Women react differently to things and hence suffer differently. In a patriarchal Third World society like ours the female is treated differently, both by the male half and by the female half of society. In India where female infanticide, dowry deaths and rape are certainly not rare phenomena, the female condition cries out for

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articulation. The birth of a girl itself is unwelcome. I would like to quote the first few lines of 'Woman With a Past' by Lakshmi Kannan.

> I was born with a past
> right from the moment I emerged
> dripping with mother's blood
> squealing, my cries mingling with
> the moans of the women around
> lamenting the birth
> of a baby girl.
> Uninvited guest
> the arrival, an indiscretion.....

The spirit of the times leaves its imprint on the lives of individuals. A poetry concerned with personal matters and relationships, of private fear and dream can become a gesture for an entire sex, a community or a people.

What is confessional poetry ? This paper is not the place to offer an elaborate definition. The primary meaning should not be lost sight of, that it 'confesses' to feeling and experience, guilt and hate, love and lust and those fleeting moments of transcendence humans are occasionally blessed with. It is self-revelatory, a poetry of sometime obscure and private detail. Slices of autobiography that disclose intimate aspects of an author's life have become grist to the poetic mill, especially since Robert Lowell's *Life Studies* published in 1959, and after Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton became cult figures in the USA. Willy-nilly the reader finds himself in a voyeuristic role watching everything from a sexual bout to a mental breakdown.

'Personal Poetry' would probably be a better term to use for Indian women poets. But it would have entailed another definition and the tedium of a hair-split between 'confessional' and 'personal' poetry. But it would be worthwhile pointing out distinctions between the confessional mode as utilized in India and the United States. The Catholic connotations are missing here. In America it is the psycho-analytic and religious dimension which are emphasised. Poets in the West have battled against mental breakdowns and suicidal tendencies. The Indian muse has been free from such afflictions. To press the point, Anne Sexton, one of the arch priestesses of the cult of confessional poetry took to the muse because it was a course of action prescribed by her psychiatrist. She had been admitted to a mental hospital for the second time in 1956, attempted suicide on November 9, and by December had started writing poetry, encouraged by her second psychiatrist, Dr. Martin. As Ralph Mills has observed, her very first book *To Bedlam and Back* deals with "disturbing forays into the most private areas of experience, its exposure of mental illness and hospitalization, ties of love and hate between child and parents."

An interview with William Packard in 1970 went as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| William Packard: | How would you define confessional poetry? |
| Anne Sexton : | How would *you* define confessional poetry? |
| William Packard: | We'd probably say it was autobiographical associated with a certain purgation, and sometimes classified as therapy. |

Since mental breakdowns are not such an imminent threat here, the therapeutic element is missing. We are not concerned with controversies such as "whether the writing of personal poetry is in fact healthful and purgative for the poet — a kind of spiritual progress — or whether it can be almost the reverse, a destructive reopening of psychic wounds." (Allan Williamson in his book *Introspection and Contemporary Poetry*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1984, p. 13).

To a great extent confessional poetry comes to mean in Indian writing, love poetry which is revelatory of intimate details and complex emotions. In the permissive atmosphere of the West this would not be treated as anything radical. With our social mores, this becomes a bravura gesture, a brush with revolution, as it were. In quantitative terms, love poetry overshadows all other strains in confessional poetry. And it is through love poetry that the implicit (and at times explicit) commentary on male indifference, callousness, insensitivity, exploitation of the female come through. Take Kamala Das and her treatment of love. The first love poem we encounter in her *oeuvre* is, perhaps appropriately entitled *Freaks (Summer in Calcutta)*. From the title itself you know that the reaction to love here will be complex. The mouth of the man is 'a dark/cavern, where stalactites of/uneven teeth gleam'. His hand is already on her knee.

can't this man with
Nimble finger-tips unleash
Nothing more alive than the
Skin's lazy hungers? Who can
Help us who have lived so long
And have failed in love?

The poem ends with the lines:

I am a freak. It's only
To save my face, I flaunt, at
Times, a grand, flamboyant lust.

That her first love poem in her first book should be on the failure of love, is, I think significant. In the next poem in the same genre ('Fear of the Year') we come across 'slow desires' on 'idle beds' beside indifferent faces. The three constants of Kamala Das' love poetry are the skin's lazy hungers, male indifference and the female need for love. She frankly talks of begging for love at 'stranger's doors' in the poem "My Grandmother's House."

In a piercing poem, 'In Love' his limbs like 'carnivorous plants' reach out for her, and she is reminded of the 'sad lie' of her 'unending lust'. At night she tosses about sleepless, while corpse-bearers on the Burdwan Road move past, crying 'Bol Hari Bol', a

> million questions awake in
> Me, and all about him, and
> This skin-communicated
> Thing that I dare not yet in
> His presence call our love.

Another point that gets repeated in her poetry is the rot that sets into love relationships. In 'The Wild Bougainvillae' the references to the dead fish in the sea, and garbage and the cemetery are all tailored to a purpose — to show a wilting illicit love which leaves her in the end, dreamless but free.

In 'A Relationship' she is anti-feminist in her stance, talking of the 'blind kindness of his lips' and admitting that her peace lay only in her 'betrayer's arms.'

A woman in the West may perhaps not elaborate on unrequited love. It would hurt pride. In the third world it would be the accepted norm. In "Sea Shore" she refers to —

> all those destroying ones who leave you by
> Night, to lie so ravaged, so spent like a sea shore
> In empty hours under moon..... ? Not knowing what
> Else to do, I kiss your eyes, dear one, your lips like
> Petals drying at the edges, the burnt cheeks and
> The dry grass of your hair, and in stillness I sense
> The tug of time, I see you go away from me
> And feel the loss of love I never once received.

Her world is 'roofed with hostile skies'. The male does not see her with eyes 'but with hands'. The feeling of being used by pawing males and of being exploited is hinted at in various poems. Male cruelty and exploitation go hand in hand. The child who stones a chameleon and weeps, not for pity, but for discovering his own cruelty, is cruel to women in his adulthood. ("The Killing of Chameleons")

Along with the thrill of skin-communicated sex, there is also a parallel doubt that nags her poems. In 'Conflagration', a poem from Descendants, she says

> Woman, is this happiness, this lying buried
> Beneath a man ? It's time again to come alive.
> The world extends a lot beyond his six-foot frame.

In the same poem she tells her own 'inert fires' to "warm the coalstreams of his eternal flesh." There is possibly a misprint here. Either the words used are 'coal seams' or 'cold streams'. Be that as it may, the important phrase here is the male's 'eternal flesh'. None of Kamala Das' poems refer to the male spirit. The male has not been granted a moment of grace. Obviously she finds the carnal in the male so overwhelming that his soul has never drifted into her reckoning. That itself is social commentary enough.

Everything that Kamala Das says about love need not be catalogued. But "The Bangles" deserves mention. It deals with a month-long out of town fling.

> In sleep, the woman lashes
> At pillows with bangled arms; in
> Vain she begs bad dreams to fade.
> The man switches on the light and
> looks into her face with his
> grey, pitiless eyes......

The claustrophobia of the affair is palpable, this clandestine liaison within the four walls of a flat where even the windows are darkly draped "to make/The lonely noons lightless like/Wombs". The same constricting reality of love overtakes the victims in 'The Sunshine Cat', the man the girl loved, not loving her enough, "being selfish/And a coward" and "the husband who neither loved nor/Used her" locking her up everyday till the ray of light that kept her company in the morning disappears with the onset of winter and the woman is taken out cold and "half-dead" "now of no use at all to men." Relationship with the male is confined to love relationship in Kamala Das. And often all that it seems to bring the woman is claustrophobia and near death.

The poem 'Suicide' in her second volume, *Descendants* is a desperate articulation for being loved. Throughout she shows a longing for an emotionally stable life, a state which can only be achieved through receiving love, mostly a man's love. When this is not forthcoming, which is most of the time if one were to believe her, she starts her flailing against the male. The longing for love is expressed uninhibitedly:

> O sea, I am fed up
> I want to be simple
> I want to be loved
> And
> If love is not to be had
> I want to be dead, just dead.
> (Suicide)

In many poems love is like the inner sanctum of some dark god, a place she can never hope to enter. But the journey in the direction of this sanctum leads to self-knowledge, mostly of the lusts of one's own flesh.

There is also a considerable use of hospital imagery in the good old tradition of Sylvia Plath :

I dream of obscene hands
Striding up my limbs and of morgues where the night-lights
Glow on faces shuttered by the soul's exit (sic). And
of ward-boys, sepulchral, wheeling me through long
corridors
To the X-ray room's dark interior.

Eunice de Souza has a different elan about her. Her strong suit is satire and she deals with the sexes fairly even-handedly. One is not conscious of the poet suffering from any persecution complexes or hallucinatory fears as one reads her. And yet only a part of the above statement is true. The unjust inequality inherent in the man-woman relationship is bound to surface, even where the treatment of the theme is down to earth, as it is with Eunice. Take her poem "Marriages are Made' :

My cousin Elena
is to be married.
The formalities
have been completed;
her family history examined
for T.B. and madness
her father declared solvent
her eyes examined for squints
her teeth for cavities
her stools for the possible
non-Brahmin worm.
She's not quite tall enough
and not quite full enough
(children will take care of that)
her complexion it was decided
would compensate, being just about
the right shade
of rightness
to do justice to
Francisco X. Noronha Prabhu
good son of Mother Church.

Unlike most of Kamala Das' poems, this is in the third person, is factual and heavily loaded with satire. There are two other savage poems in her book *Fix*, in the same genre *Poem from a Poet* and *He Speaks.* If the first is an attack on the males rather original method of seduction, the second deals with the rather ridiculous male with an air of superiority about him whose revenge, however, has a singular streak of diablerie about it.

Her pleadings wore
me down. She was an affectionate
creature and tried hard, poor dear,
but never quite made the grade.
She *would* walk too close to me
and then protest naively: How
should lovers walk? Show me:
Ridiculous, too, her unseemly
mirth when I said confidentially:
I have such an hypnotic effect
on women. Everywhere I go
they fall into my arms.
Jamie Bond! she cried
My man is India's answer to
Jamie Bond!
After that pathological display
I decided there was only one
thing to do: fix her.
The next time we were making love
I said quite casually:
I hope you realize I do this
with other women.

Poems like 'For a Child not Clever' and 'de Souza Prabhu' deal with a sense of personal inadequacy.

No matter that
my name is Greek
my surname Portuguese
my language alien.

There are ways
of belonging.

I belong with the lame ducks.
I heard it said
my parents wanted a boy.
I've done my best to qualify.
I hid the bloodstains
on my clothes
and let my breasts sag.
(de Souza Prabhu)

The poem above and 'Autobiographical' stand at the heart of confessional poetry as we know it.

Right now, here it comes.
I killed my father when I was three
I have muddled through several affairs
and always come out badly....

Yes, I've tried suicide.
I tidied my clothes but
left no notes. I was surprised
to wake up in the morning.

I thought the whole world
was trying to rip me up
cut me down, go through me
with a razor blade

then I discovered
a cliche : that's what I wanted
to do to the world.

In "One Man's Poetry" she declares

Irony as an attitude to life
is *passé*, you said
So be it, friend.
Let me be *passé* and survive.
Leave me the cutting edge of words.

The autobiographical strain recurs in the poem

Chances are
my father himself
didn't wish to die

My mother watched by his bedside
and never forgave herself
for being asleep
the night he died.
He left a desk, a chair,
a typewriter, and a notebook.
At family gatherings
my mother smiled
in her best faded chiffon
and travelled third
with her in-laws travelling first
in the same train.

A better example of a pointed social comment stemming from the autobiographical vein would be difficult to find. The references to suicide in 'Autobiographical' quoted earlier may lead one perhaps to similar lines in Anne Sexton or Sylvia Plath, both of whom eventually committed suicide. But the kind of comment on the status of a widowed daughter-in-law can, because of our social mores, be heard only in Indian poetry.

There are places in this paper where love poetry has been used almost synonymously with the confessional mode. Love poetry as an assertion of the sex, of womanhood, of the desire and the will to break social barriers, on the one hand, and as revelatory of the inscape of a poet's mind on the other, is of considerable importance. But Indian women poets have, though fleetingly, showed wider sympathies. Eunice de Souza in 'Varca 1942' and Kamala Das in her poems on the plight of Tamils of Sri Lanka have addressed themselves to famine and racial oppression. Meena Alexander has also touched such themes. A poet of enormous talent, Meena Alexander has not been discussed here because her poetry is distanced from the confessional mode under discussion. A poem "Brief Chronicle by Candle Light" needs mention, as a searing testament on the female condition.

Children torn by the winds
married women burnt in their own homes
I thought I had seen it all that night
as I lit a candle at my door....

In a forest of bamboo once bent to a storm
I heard hundreds of whispering feet.
Countless women, their hours lent
to pounding grain
massaging the ankles of strangers,
their necks spent with bearing bricks
sticks, straw for fires that could one day consume them
would they perish at the muddy centre
of all our gathered lives.

The stresses of womanhood in a third world country, the imposed modes of behaviour have self-evidently been touched upon here. But woman poetry is not solely on the condition of woman. The feminine muse is locked for ever in the present, moment-bound, like feeling itself. Their poems are personal testaments of courage and an acknowledgement of their own weaknesses (another name for courage). Childhood becomes a garden of Eden. Grandparents are idealized and idolised (see both Das and Meena Alexander). Adulthood with its hair in the wrong places and burgeoning of glands is equivalent to the Fall in the work of poets like Kamala Das, for whom pubescence is the original sin. Innocence and bliss, knowledge and guilt/hurt go together.

There is seldom any attempt to absorb hurt through "the mind's powers of understanding and categorization." No emotional equilibium is sought and hence none is restored. Anne Sexton has been criticised for "excessive self-dramatization, even spilling into undertones of self-pity." These defects are more pronounced in the Indian poets. The exhibitionism involved in sporting "a grand flamboyant lust", the seemingly inherent contradiction in striking a public posture on a matter of private feeling, takes its toll. In 'Loud Posters' Kamala Das laments that

> "I've stretched my two dimensional
> Nudity in sheets of weeklies, monthlies
> Quarterlies, a sad sacrifice."

In 'Tom-Tom' she announces by drum-beat that at the age of 37 her ovaries have been taken out. The echoes from Plath and Sexton are clearly there. There is nothing wrong in this. If the echoes of T.S. Eliot and Yeats can be heard now and then in the work of men poets, there is nothing untoward in Plath and Sexton making an impact on women writers. What we eventually get from the feminine muse is a more private sensibility dealing with events generally considered private, in lives that are less open and more restricted to the four walls of the home, familial ties and man-woman relationships.

That it should, despite all this insularity, provide a fairly exhaustive commentary on the state of the society and its mores can either be described as a quirk of irony or a boon from the Muse herself.

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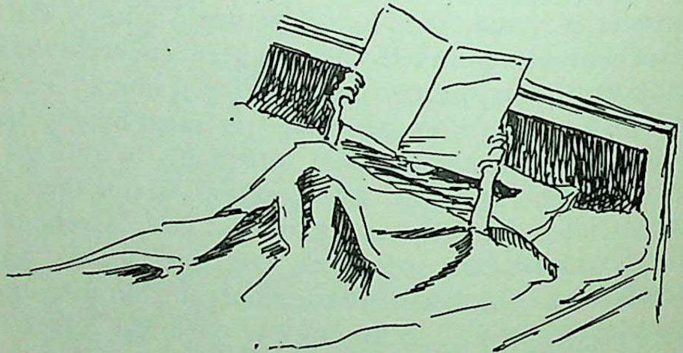

# Wildlife in Sanskrit Literature

*José Pereira*

Of all the classical literature of the world, the Tamil and the Sanskrit undoubtedly possess the richest descriptions of wildlife. Sanskrit, in particular, abounds in resources for the task; considering that it is "more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either". It also has the copulative compound of aggregation, the *Samāhāradvandva*, which permits it to unify into one syntactical structure a plurality of phenomena perceived as being conceptually united. The painterly imagination views a certain complex of coloured forms as a unity, and canvas and colours facilitate the conflation of those forms into the artistic unit that is the painting. Likewise, the aggregate of images that the literary imagination undoubtedly perceives as being unified, is verbally amalgamated by the device of the aggregative compound into a literary unit. This capacity of Sanskrit's to unify the complicated is extended by its other characteristic which can only be described as "operatic". Classical Sanskrit verse forms, with their intricate meters, can be said to be verbal equivalents of the *aria*, an elaborate and often lengthy solo song with instrumental accompaniment; ornamental Sanskrit, prose, with its multiple rhythms, can be described as the verbal equivalent of the *recitative*, a musical declaration for the solo voice, also accompanied by instruments. In Sanskrit, its immanent resonance suffices as accompaniment. And its pictorial and operatic qualities reach their apotheosis in Bāṇa, perhaps the most controlledly exuberant imagination the world has ever known.

The true setting of wildlife is the forest, lavishly described by Sanskrit poets, not least by Bāṇa himself. Life in the forest can be said to be one of concordant strife, but there are moments when the strife is stilled. One such moment is portrayed by Bāṇa, in his account of King Harṣa's visit to the Vindhya forest. At the moment described by Bāṇa, "the hollow trunks of the holarrhena trees (*kuṭajas*) were

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inhabited by hens who had hatched chicks only a few days before; the little sparrows chirped flatteringly while they were being taken from one tree to another by their mothers; the beaks of partridges were engaged in skillfully feeding their mates; the *bhuruṇḍa* birds tranquilly ate the ripe brown fruit of the *pılu* tree; ruthless parrots, adept at piercing the never failing *kaṭphala* trees, let fall their unripe berries; baby hares basked happily on the smooth rocks; swarms of young lizards rolled about fearlessly in the hollows between the fibrous roots of the nyctantes trees (*séphālikā*); the deer were unfraid; groups of dreadless mongooses gamboled; soft-voiced cuckoos devoured the opening buds; herds of *camuru* deer lay ruminating in mango groves; flocks of *nılaṇḍaja* birds rested at their ease; motionless wolves watched gayal cows suckle their young; the drum-like flapping of the elephants' ears grew languid in the pleasant sleep induced by the lulling sounds of the cataracts falling from the nearby mountain slope; the *ruru* deer listened well pleased to the songs of the neighboring *kinnaris*; the hyenas were greatly thrilled; herds of young boars had their snouts reddened by the drops of orange juice of the turmeric trees they had pierced; polecats made low noises in abrus shrubs (*guñja*); tribes of *salijatakas* slept in nutmeg trees; young monkeys, angry at being bitten, tore in pieces the nests of red worms; lion-tailed macaques, eager for breadfruit, leaped across the *lavalī* shrubs.... and the peacocks raised the storm of their cries as if the dark thickets were so many clouds".

The tranquillity described in this passage, though free of strife, is not devoid of activity, which sometimes develops into turbulence, and eventually conflict, as can be seen in another passage of Bāṇa, also on the Vidhya forest. Reported by the parrot Vaisampāyana, the turmoil of wildlife is reflected in the exclamations of the hunters, the agents of its doom :

"From this way comes the scent of the lotus beds crushed by leaders of elephant herds ! This way the perfume of the grass juice chewed by a crowd of hogs ! This way the keen fragrance of the gum-olibanum trees torn apart by young elephants ! This way the rustling sound of fallen dry leaves ! This way the herd of deer ! This way the dust of anthills blasted by the adamantine horns of wild buffaloes ! This way the troops of wild elephants ! This way a multitude of wild buffaloes ! This way the shriek of a circle of peacocks ! This way the murmur of a covey of partridges ! This way the cry of a colony of ospreys ! This way the groan of elephants with their frontal bones torn by lions' claws !

Here is the track of boars messy with fresh mud ! Here is a mass of foam from the rumination of deer, darkened by the juice of grass just eaten ! Here is the hum of bees garrulous as they cling to the scent left by the rubbing of elephants' foreheads with ichor flowing !

There is the path of the *ruru* deer red with withered leaves wet with trickling blood ! There is a mass of shoots of trees crushed by the feet of elephants ! There are the frolics of rhinoceroses ! There is the lions' track jagged with pieces of elephant pearls red with blood and scratched with leafy lines by their claws ! There is the earth crimsoned with the blood of the newly-born offspring of does ! That is the path, like a woman's braid, dark with the ichor of the lord of the herd who has strayed !"

Sanskrit poets allude to all kinds of animals, but generally prefer to describe in detail only mammals and birds, both forms of life evolving from the reptile, but united by a strange hatred for their common ancestor. Though themselves mammals, our poets seem to have a preference for birds, no doubt because those creatures possess qualities that human mammals have always envied : grace, gorgeous vesture and, most of all, freedom of movement, particularly in the air.

These poets' description of wildlife can be classified into three types, in all of which the creatures characterized are those known to zoology, and do not belong to the worlds of mythology or fancy. But the mode of description differs. In the first type, there is no rhetorical embellishment, and if there is, it is not essential to the effectiveness of the description. In the second type, natural characteristics are enhanced by rhetorical figures and by symbolism; in the third, the animals perform activities not observable in the natural world. We may call these types of description, respectively, the natural, the enhanced and the preternatural.

## 1. NATURAL DESCRIPTION

The first kind of description, the *natural* (or *svabhāvokti*), consists of unadorned characterizations of features or behavior, chiefly of living things, carefully and subtly observed. In repeating these descriptions, I shall first refer to the birds and then to the mammals. The animal world is one of beauty and terror, in different degrees of intensity, in the sky and on earth. In both these regions, beauty at its intensest is symbolized by the goose (*haṁsa*) and terror by the vulture (*gṛdhra*). In the sky Kālidāsa's royal geese accompany the messenger cloud up to Mount Kailāsa; they long for the Mānasa lake and carry juicy bits of lotus fibers as food for the journey. On earth, Bhavabhūti's impassioned geese agitate the tall-stemmed lotuses in lakes by the flutter of their wings. As for the vultures, Viśākhadatta pictures them in the sky, forming themselves in a circle, their wings long and motionless, and they remain hovering in the air. On earth, in King Harṣa's account, they congregate in burning grounds, avid for morsels of flesh from the corpses, which they half grip and half let fall from their beaks. They flap their wings and produce an intense darkness in the burning ground. To the eyes of the artist, vultures have a beauty of their own, but in Sanskrit poetry they typify repulsiveness. Another image of terror in the sky, but not a repulsive one, is that of the hawk (*cilla*). As Manovinoda, the Pāla court poet, observes, the bird looks down, turning his head to either side. Gradually and for some time, with steady wing, he circles softly in the sky. Then, skilled at catching prey, his feet and head in motion, he suddenly swoops down at an angle and attacks.

On earth beauty is symbolized by peacocks, pigeons and sparrows; terror, veiled in beauty, takes the shape of herons, kingfishers, shrikes and cocks. The beauty represented by the peacock is usually that of the dance, and by pigeons and sparrows, sometimes that of erotic passion. An anonymous poet envisages a peacock as an actor dancing offstage for the amusement of his mate. He calls to her with gentle cries, but she is loitering somewhere. He frequently glances up at the sky, in all directions and, quitting his stage, the earth, the joyful bird turns his unfurled train of feathers into a parasol and dances to the rumble of the clouds, delightful as the beats on a wide drum. Another anonymous poet, also a careful peacock watcher, tells of how these birds raise their tails, lower and rustle the mass of their feathers, which swish as they are whirled, open their upraised beaks in song, while their feet constantly move to rhythm. Lifting up their necks, and peering at the mass of clouds dark as their own necks, they bring together the expanse of their feathers and dance.

Yet strife is not lacking in the lives of the peacocks, for they are the bane of the snakes. Somadeva observes how the floor of the forest is marked by the deep scratches made by the nails of young peacocks furious at the sight of serpents entering anthills.

Eros reveals himself in the activities of birds like pigeons and sparrows. A mysterious poet, Vikramāditya by name, tells of a pigeon (*Pārāvata*) woken in the morning by the tinkling anklets of passing whores. Excited, he shakes his wing tip and imprints a long kiss with his beak on his mate whose eyes are still somewhat closed. Passionately he coos, his throat muted by the gentle swaying of his neck. As for the more agile sparrows (*caṭaka*), they are not slow to consummate their passion. The poet So̊nnoka once observed the mating of these birds. The cock-sparrow raises his tail, his body panting with desire. Lowering his wings, he circles gracefully round his mate again and again in gentle hops. His chirping is faint from longing, while the crouching hen, eager for sex, cries softly all the while until, trembling, and in a quick moment, he mounts her.

The love that overmasters the sparrow is the same as the love that enslaves the gods, even the greatest. "Adoration to love, the crocodile-bannered god", exclaims Bhartṛhari, "who turns Śiva, Brahmā and Viṣṇu into household slaves of their deer-eyed mates, adoration to him who is beyond the reach of words and hallowed only by deeds!"

But alas, love has not yet conquered death, which sometimes appears under the mask of beauty, as with the herons (*bakoṭa*). These birds afforded much amusement to the poet Madhukaṇṭha, who noticed them standing by the backwaters of winter streams, striking downwards at their feet and shaking their heads tearfully as the cyprinus fishes (*sephari*) with flashing tails glided between the hollows in the reeds. Another image of terror to the fish, like a flashing blue arrow of death, and which rarely misses its mark, is the kingfisher (*matsyaranka*). As the poet Vākpatirāja notes, this bird can be seen darting up high, shaking its wings, peering intently below, instantly fixing its aim, plunging into the water with a dive and surfacing with a fish.

Predators strike a terror into their prey that is heightened when associated with that embodiment of terror in motion, the forest fire, which drives the grasshoppers before it as it ravages the forest trees. The fear and helplessness of these creatures is exploited by these fork-tailed shrikes (*dhumyata*). Cruel within their ranges as Madhukantha tells us, the shrikes fly this way and that, never far from the fire, terrible with its garland of flames licking the heavens. They move slowly, because of their relish for the grasshoppers. Smoke-colored and difficult to spot because of the thick fall of black ash, they shriek as they fly from tree to tree.

Occasionally this strife affects the predators themselves, as happens typically with cocks. An acute observer of these birds, probably Vararuci, notes how two of them, over and over again, engage with relish in cruel swift-footed battle, their nails bruised by the collision of their heavily vibrating feet raised in attack. They stagger under the pecks of their darting beaks, fearsome with shaking combs, and their dipping necks flash with the flare of their dread hackles rising in a circle.

Alongside these images of beauty and terror appear those of the helplessness of animals, especially of young ones, sometimes spared by fate from the cruel attack of predators. An anonymous poet once noticed young reed thrushes at dawn. Their necks were raised, the hollows of their pink mouths distorted, their palates quivered with thirst and their bodies trembled with unformed wings. Flying up a little from the ground, they pushed one another to the river bank and there drank the dew from the blades of prickly cane.

But not all the innocent are equally fortunate. "In front of me is a hunter, armed with sharp arrows; to my side is a row of nets; behind me a fire, fanned by the breeze, and near me is a dog. My mate is pregnant and moves slowly, and she has fawns clinging to her". Thus reflects the unhappy deer, "What shall I do, where shall I go ?"

At the crucial moment, however, sages and ascetics occasionally appear, and save the animal from the hunter as happened with the deer chased from a chariot by king Duśyanta. The fleeing animal cast frequent glances at the chariot by a graceful turning of its neck; through fear of the falling arrows it drew its haunches into the foreparts of its body. Its track was scattered with half-chewed grass falling from its mouth gaping with exhaustion. By its high leaps it moved mostly in the air and only slightly on the ground.

India was a paradise of wildlife till about a century ago, due in large measure to the compassion for animals inculcated by the Jain and Buddhist religions. "In my kingdom", proclaimed the great Buddhist emperor Asoka in his very first edict, "no living beings are to be killed and offered in sacrifice". The scriptures of these religions did not contain divine commands to dominate the earth which could be invoked to justify the exploitation of nature and the massacre of animals. A soul akin to Aśoka's was later born in Christendom, Francis of Assisi. Had he also been an emperor, he would undoubtedly have issued similar orders. But, living as he did in a world which believed that the right to hunt was practically God-given, his hopes of what his own sovereign could be expected to do were more modest. "If I could speak to the Emperor", the Poverello is said to have remarked, "I would implore and persuade him for the love of God (and for my sake) to enact a law forbidding anyone to kill our sisters the larks, or do them any harm." Yet it must also be observed that, though the Sanskrit poets' sympathies seem to lie with the animals and not with their hunters, these poets were also panegyrists of kings, and as such given to extolling their masters' hunting exploits and celebrating their orgies of slaughter.

Still, the deer's life is not entirely one of fear. Someśvara III, the Calukya monarch, renowned encyclopedist, conoisseur of the arts, and writer of a Sanskrit prose modelled on that of Bāna, observes that the axis deer love to roam dense forests, their necks weighed by tall and many-branched antlers, which they rub against thick hiptage (*madhavi*) creepers. Their tails are raised, their bellies clean and white; so are their necks, but marked by dark veins, while their eyes are red. Kalidasa's own favorite animal seems to have been the deer; he notes that axis fawns are always getting in the way of their mothers, whose mouths are always full of grass. Often, when excited, these animals move against the wind through the forest echoing with the rustle of dry leaves, even though their eyes are blinded by pollen from the buchanania tree (*priyāla*).

With the mammal introduced into descriptions of wildlife, an element of comedy enters, for mammals appear to be greater clowns than birds. This clownishness is particularly evident in the lovemaking of asses, dramatized by Mayura, contemporary and rival of Bāṇa. The he-ass repeatedly sniffs the scene of his mate; the hollow of his mouth is distorted and the rows of his teeth are displayed. He brays again and again with ardor as he runs along, following close on her heels, drawn by fascination. His passion is redoubled by the she-ass's kicks, and with his penis drawn out, he mounts her impetuously, swoons with delight, and then gets off her, his desire sated at last.

Cousin to the ass is the graceful horse, on which Bāna himself has two poems, depicting the start of a horse's day. The animal begins stretching out his feet behind, elongating his body upward by bending his spine, while with bowed neck he leans his mouth on his breast. He then shakes his mane of its smoky dust. His projecting nostrils move restlessly from a craving for fodder. Whinnying softly, he rises from his bed and paws the earth with his hoof. He then bends his back, brings his hips near his mouth, and strikes his neck sideways by his restless mane, from which drops of dew are shaken off. His shell-like ears are matted with curls. With his hoof he scratches the corner of his eye inflamed by an itch in sleep, while minute bits of chaff hang on his trembling eyelashes.

Even greater clowns than the asses are the monkeys, and they often come to grief because of their clowning. Someśvara describes a monkey which climbed up a high sandal tree in the Karnataka jungle and grasped the neck of a dark serpent that looked like a creeper hanging from a branch; when the reptile began to struggle, the monkey loosened his fist, glancing again and again in fear through the corners of his eyes. He lowered his ears, was fooled by the swinging of the snake's body, and when struck by its tail screeched, his cries exposing his teeth. More dignified than the monkeys are their cousins, the lion-tailed macaques. These creatures, with manes of long grey hair and glossy black coats, as Someśvara reports, love the drops of honey dripping from a saturated beehive constructed on a huge and inaccessible pinnacle on a hill. The macaques break it open with a slab of rock, turn their heads upwards, and let the nectarine fluid trickle into their mouths.

It is in the description of the elephants, those mighty creatures at once clownish and dignified, that Sanskrit poets excel. They are especially beloved of Bhavabhuti and Bāṇa. Bhavabhūti portrays the leader of a herd of elephants in rut entering a lake. His mate hears the deep sound of his roars with delight. His temples are muddied by gushing ichor, cool and fragrant as a mass of blooming anthocephalus flowers (*Kadamba*). The lake in which he enters has a whole lotus bed torn up, with a mass of leaves, lotus filaments, stalks, bulbs and soft shoots floating on its surface. His ears oscillate uninterruptedly in a beautiful frenzied dance, forming a current of air which scatters the waves and diffuses a mist over the lake, terrifying the ospreys and cranes.

Elephants love to bathe in pools. If an elephant could speak, it would doubtless describe its bath in the words of Nilakaṇṭha Dikṣita. "I entered the corner of a pool", it would say, "I showered my body with sprays of water; I also tasted the water, and have returned". But what of the pool itself? Its waters would be muddied, its banks ruined, and its waterlilies uprooted.

The havoc perpetuated in a pool by a herd of bathing elephants leaves its vestiges in their path from the pool, as is delineated by Bāṇa with his usual picturesque precision. The track is wet with lumps of mud brought up by the elephants' feet; it is speckled with clusters of lotuses, with their fibers, roots and stalks, dragged along by their trunks; it is darkened by dripping duckweed and strewn at intervals with uprooted blue and white waterlilies; it is scattered with broken clusters of many-colored flowers and woodland sprays, confused by sundered creepers covered by flowers with bees emerging from them; and it is everywhere sprinkled with ichor, bearing the perfume of fresh flowers and dark as the sap of garcinia xanthochymus shoots. (*tamāla*).

But the frolics of the elephants are overcast by their fear of lions. Their herds assemble in a dense and towering mass, but, as Somesvara declares, when a single lion goes near them, he is overcome with fury at their sight. Proudly flaring his crested mane, he lets out a roar. Hearing its reverberations the elephants, terrified, lower their heads, open their ears, lift up their trunks, gently strike the earth with their feet, raise their tusks, contract their bodies, and cover their eyes and faces, trumpeting in terror. Yet there are other elephants, like Bāṇa's Darpaśāta, who despise such pusillanimous beasts, and think them scarecrows; and they scorn the lions who vaunt their rough play with them. Sometimes, the tables are turned and the prides of lions, as the poet Vallaṇa maintains, nervous with apprehension from smelling the particles of scent blown from the track of the rutting elephant, seek out the corners of their several dens and hide both head and tail under their shrunken breasts. Indian sculptors knew as well as Indian writers, that lions cannot always win, as can be seen in the mighty lion-and-elephant frieze on the podium of the Kailasa at Ellora. One of the victorious lions seems to have been carefully observed by Subandhu. Fearsome of face, his body curved by the raising of his haunches and the depression of his foreparts, his tail implanted on his wide, lengthened and immobile back but curving forward, the pit of his mouth horrid with its row of fangs, the lion tossed high his mane, straightened his ears, and leaped on a mighty elephant.

Sanskrit poets seem to believe that lions exist only to kill elephants. They rarely devote much attention to the other big cats. Somesvara has a rare portrait of a leopard stalking a deer. He hides his body for a moment, dashes forward with great speed, brings down his goad-like nails on the blackbuck, tearing its back with his teeth and also its slim belly, cleverly avoiding the impact of the animal's horns. Among the other carnivores are the bears, more comical than dreadful. Somesvara describes their huge bodies as masses of lampblack; the animals stick their heads into holes in anthills and suck in heaps of termites.

## 2. ENHANCED DESCRIPTION

If natural description enables us to imagine what India must have looked like till about 1800, the description of the second kind, the *enhanced*, helps us to visualize how that vanished world excited the imagination of India's greatest poets, inspiring them to create an indestructible world of fantasy. This creation was made possible by artful or "curved" speech (*vakrokti*), one standing in contrast to the straight or "natural" speech (*svabhavokti*), discussed above. In turning to this curved speech, believed to lie at the basis of all poetic embellishment, we attain the grand style of Sanskrit writing, one more in accord with the language's overwhelming opulence.

In some descriptions of wildlife, however, these embellishments are so carefully concealed, that on the surface they look like those of the natural variety, such as the one of whooper swans (*dhartarastra*) in the autumn season. As Bhatta Narayana says, they have lovely wings and sweet voices; they beautify the quarters; their activities are wild with excitement, and they come down to earth through the influence of the season. While hardly a poetic master-piece, the above description in punningly also intended to convey the following sense: the evil sons of Dhṛtarastra have good allies and honeyed speech; they have conquered the quarters; their activities are arrogant with power-madness; and they fall dead on earth through the power of fate.

But Sanskrit poets chose to create enhanced descriptions of wildlife not so much for the opportunity to pun, as for that of expressing their admiration for the beauty of animals, particularly in its aspect of color. Saturated with color even terror, the other pole of animal existence, appears only as a particularly intense mode of beauty. And it is these enhanced descriptions, rather than the natural ones, that reveal the genius of Sanskrit poetry. The unadorned simplicity of natural description inhibits the natural exuberance of India's Baroque vision, which climaxed in the volcanic imagination of Bāṇa, an imagination ever ready to explode in a blaze of multitudinous images. Sanskrit poets are undoubtedly India's greatest painters, the riches of their vocabulary almost making up for canvas, brushes and paint. As for India's brush-wielding painters, their genius was constrained by a lack of versatile techniques as those of oil painting, or of vast spaces such as were at the disposal of Giotto, Tintoretoo and Tiepolo. But Sanskrit is prolific in words for color alone, let alone other objects; the lexicographer Amara lists 18 words for white, 12 for yellow and orange, 10 for red and violet, 7 for blue and black, and 3 for green.

Colors are of two kinds, chromatic and achromatic. The achromatic colors, black, white and grey, have always fascinated Sanskrit writers. Bears and buffaloes represent black, especially the latter. The blackness of the night, unrelieved by the presence of any celestial luminary, is compared by Bhāsa to a hundred buffaloes; and, as palliated by the moonlight, is portrayed by Baṇa as Darkness the elephant whitened by the powder of its own pearls falling from its temples torn apart by Moon the lion. Between black and white falls grey. Bāṇa, picturing a forest abandoned by hermits, reflects that the smoke of their vanished sacrifices still clings to the trees in the shape of the grey pigeons perching on their branches.

But it is white that holds the greatest fascination for our poets : it is represented by cranes, geese and flamingoes. At times this white is so intense that it almost seems chromatic, chroma being defined in color theory as purity, intensity or saturation in hue. Here we must remark that, in the accounts of our poets, cranes are sometimes confused with herons. And it is hard to distinguish their "royal geese" (*rājahaṁsa*), said to be dazzlingly white, from the flamingoes. The nearest equivalent to a "royal" goose is the barheaded goose (*anser indicus*), which is grey, brownish and white; Bāṇa remarks that a flock of such geese, moving among beds of blooming white lotuses, could only be made out by their quacks. On the other hand the flamingo (*phoenicopterus roseus*) is indeed a bright white, but it also has black-bordered scarlet wings which our writers do not seem to notice. The two birds are therefore best distinguished by the length of their feet : if there is any indication that the feet are long and red, it is a flamingo; if not, it is a goose.

Vodissa, the Maharastrī poet, has a picture of a crane where the bird, still and unmoving on a lotus leaf, glistens like a conch in a plate of spotless emerald. White appears lustrous against a dark background. An image beloved of our poets is the arc of cranes, described by Kalidasa as an arch without columns. In another place Kālidāsa likens the crane-encircled mass of storm clouds, its path blazing with fulminated forked lightnings, to the goddess of death, Kali, garlanded with skull, preceded by the seven golden-splendored Mothers (*saptamātṛka*) goddesses of terror. A dark background for the flight of wild geese is the sky, blue as the body of Kṛṣṇa, as an unknown poet imagines it, against which the geese shine like conches (the conch being one of Kṛṣṇa's symbols). With the sky as their inevitable background, geese often fly over sheets of water, when, as the poet Manovinoda observes, they have the semblance, in the sky, of white clouds, and in the water, of white lotus in a hundred reflections. The clusters of white waterlilies – illumined by the rays of the moon, bluish white like vitex (*sindhuvāra*) flowers, descending on the lake after a period of nocturnal darkness – are likened by Bāṇa to white geese that have descended on the sea after the darkness of the rainy season.

But the apotheosis of whiteness is the flamingo, the associate of the full moon in splendor, as Vedāntadeśika declares. Bāṇa compares the dazzling fame of a king's virtues to a flock of flamingoes (or perhaps, geese), issuing from the Krauñca mountain; and a part of king Harṣa's capital city filled with clusters of white umbrellas to islands in the white Ganges covered with flamingoes. Perhaps the most striking picture of flamingoes in Sanskrit literature is that of Mayūra, who identifies them with the nails of Viṣṇu the Man-Lion. The gaping wound made in the demon's chest by this Lion of magic is the pool in which these flamingoes stand. The Lion relishes squeezing the demon's fluttering red heart-lotus. As for the flamingoes, they tremble in the waves of the whirlpools of the streams of blood in the pool; they wallow in its flesh-mud, and make as if the joints of the demon's thick bones were mouthfuls of white lotus-fibers.

Of the chromatic colors, the most preferred by painters, according to theorists of color, are red, green and blue. This is also true of the wildlife pictures painted by our poets. Red is typified by birds like the ruddy goose (*cakravāka*), green by the parrot (*śuka*) and blue by the peacock (*mayūra*). Model of monogamous fidelity, the ruddy geese pair is condemned to be separated from sunset to sunrise. The rising moon, like a plump rosy fruit, is assimilated by Kālidāsa to the ruddy sheldrake, and the moon's reflection in a lake to its mate; the gradually widening distance between them symbolizes their slow parting.

The most popular birds in our literature are perhaps the parrot and the peacock. They go together in Indian folk imagination, and are often seen depicted together on textiles. What is remarkable about these birds is the fact that their colors are complementary. In the parrot the dominant color is green, and the subordinate one the complementary red of its beak. In the peacock blue dominates, with the complementary orange, found in the eyelets of its tail, playing a subordinate role. The red of the parrot's beak, contrasting sharply with the green of its feathers, reminds Bāṇa of the hooked claws of the tiger reddened with the blood of deer. An anonymous Mahārāṣṭri poet envisages a flock of green-bodied and red-beaked parrots descending from the sky as the broken emerald-and-ruby necklace of the Goddess of Heavenly Splendor falling to earth. Bāṇa has a more elaborate picture of the flocks of parrots flying across the heavens. They appear to him a moving emerald floor, duckweed in the lake of heaven, the cluster of the green horses of the sun's chariot diffused through the air, rainbows flashing in all directions, the lotus plants of the heavenly Ganges uprooted by the celestial elephant, and the streams of the blue Yamuna tossed about in the atmosphere by the plough of the frenzied Balarama.

Spectacularity is of the essence of a peacock's loveliness. Particularly theatrical is the manner in which it unfurls its ocellated plumage. Its stage, says Bhavabhuti, is the flowering slope of the mountain; its canopy, the clouds over the peak. While the peacock is always lovely no matter what its stance, three of its postures are most often noticed by our writers, its outstretched neck, its reclining position, and its dance. The Maharaṣṭri poet Pālita portrays a peacock in the rainy season, its neck stretched out, drinking a drop of water hanging from the tip of a reed like a pearl pierced by a needle of emerald. Asvaghoṣa's peacock, lying with folded train on a broad snowy peak, looks like a bracelet of beryl on the arm of Balarama the stout-limbed.

But it is in the dance that the peacock reveals his full splendor. For the poet Śatānanda, the forests with their serpent-hungry peacocks, joyously flourishing their tails, seem like young bushes in flower. No poet excels Bāṇa in describing the king of birds. He is especially fascinated by the iridescent blue and green of its feathers and the contrasting copper and gold of its ocelli or eyelets. The peacock's outstretched neck is like a jar of emerald; its plumage is of the hue of young grass, in which the many eyelets appear like an interwoven grove of waterlilies, and speckled as with the light of a deer's eyes. The eyelets flash from within the plumage, their golden circles seeming like those made on the surface of the lake by the drops of honey trickling from the lotuses. But it is in some of his punning descriptions of peacocks, with the associations produced by those puns, that Bāṇa invests the large blue-throated birds with a mysterious grandeur. Ascetics performing the Fivefold Fire Penance, surrounded by the uprearing flames of those fires, appear like forest trees encircled by the upreared plumages of peacocks (*ucchikhaśikhi-*

*śikhaṇḍa*). The blue-throated god, Śiva, dances against the background of the world conflagration, red as young shoots; the blue-throated bird, the peacock, dances against the background of the red of the young shoots covering the expanse of the forest trees (*pranṛtta-nīlakaṇṭhā pallava-arunā ca*).

Turning from the birds to the mammals, one of the less frequently described ones is the monkey. An anonymous Mahārāṣṭri poet speaks of a monkey, previously bitten by bees, moving away from a rose-apple tree, shaking its branches, chatering as it scratches its bark, but not daring to pluck the purple-black rose-apple, thinking it to be a bee. A favorite theme with our poets is that of the deer and the forest fire, typifying the contrast between the fragile beauty of wildlife in one of its most sensitive forms, and the destructive brilliance of wildfire in one of its most fearsome manifestations. There are two contrasting pictures, in both of which the animals act foolishly : one is by an anonymous Mahārāṣṭrī poet and the other by Bāṇa. In the former, the foolish deer does not leave the wood blazing with a row of the spreading flames of the forest fire, thinking it to be a wood of the flame-of-the forest trees. In Bāṇa's picture, the air in the palace park scintillates with tiny flashes of light from the restless eyeballs of the deer, in dread of the golden luster of the palace towers which they mistake for a forest fire.

In the description of the mammals, as of the birds, the accent is on color, but to a lesser degree than in the case of birds, doubtless because the range of hues on mammals' bodies is restricted, and lacks the intense chroma of the birds. That being so, it is strange that the tiger, with the orange splendor of its coat at once heightened and fragmented by the irradiating curviform stripes of black, did not capture the imagination of our writers. Kālidāsa's tigers appear like flowering terminalia tomentosa trees (*asana*) furrowed by the wind, the hue of their flowers reflecting that of the tiger's coat, and the shadow of their furrows its dark stripes. According to Someśvara, the black patterns on the tiger's face project the illusion of a dead blackbuck hanging around his head and cheeks, while his tail, turned towards the cave behind him, is a moving band of black lines. A more homely picture of our graceful cat is painted by Aśvaghoṣa. Moving with steady gait, as though stretched with fatigue, a tiger, going to drink at a mountain stream, his tail curled withershins, looks like a man going to offer water to his ancestors, his sacred thread hanging over his right shoulder.

Our writers' most favorite mammals seem to be that contending pair, the lion and the elephant. The huge black bulk of the amiable pachyderm reminds Viśākhadatta, as it does so many other Sanskrit poets, of a mass of clouds, but palliated in autumn as though by a net of moon rays. Bāṇa, in each of his two important works, has elaborate descriptions of elephants, but each of its characteristics call to his mind a plethora of images that obfuscate by their ornamental opulence the lineaments of the animal itself, much as the words of many an aria are overwhelmed by the ornamentation of the melody. One such characteristic is the color of its palate. When the elephant, Darpaśāta by name, lifted his trunk in play, he showed a palate soft as red silk, which appeared to shower the groves of red lotuses he had swallowed, and to disgorge a pile of red shoots. Less ornate is Viśākhadatta's picture of a herd of elephants frolicking in the Śona or the Red River, where the poet establishes similarities between two things so utterly unlike as the elephant, with its solid bulk, and the river, with its watery flux. The huge creatures scatter the river in a hundred directions: they tall in shape, it having tall banks; they streaming with ichor, it streaming with water; they resonant with the murmur of bees, it resonant with the splash of the waves; they tearing the banks with their tusks, it demolishing those banks by its current; and they red with vermillion, while it is the Red River itself.

Contrasting with the blue-gray of the elephant is the pale yellow or orange of the lion, almost its exact chromatic complementary. Sometimes this yellow is seen to be very pale indeed, almost silvery, as in the case of the lion depicted by Aśvaghoṣa, with his light-colored skin rouged by contact with arsenic and ocher in the mountains, this lion shines like a silver armlet adorned with lines of heated gold. Kālidāsa's lion, landing on the back of a russet cow, appears like a blossoming yellow-flowered symplocos tree (*lodhra*) above a mountain peak of red oxide. When attacking the elephant, the lion's claws burst open the pachyderm's temples; out fall thick pearls mixed with the spurting blood and produce, as Someśvara imagines, the sudden illusion of falling cochineal insects. The crimson shimmer of sunset reminds Bāṇa of the mane of a lion reddened with the blood of elephants. One of the most compelling pictures of a victorious lion in all of Sanskrit literature is that of Viśākhadatta, where the animal's tooth is compared to the first Maurya emperor Chandragupta, and the lion to his brilliant minister Cāṇakya, the source of the emperor's power and his protection against all adversaries. On hearing what he suspects is a plot to kill his protege, Cāṇakya exclaims: who dares to overpower the lion and from his mouth, opened wide in a yawn, pull out the tooth, shining scarlet with the tasted blood of elephants, a tooth suffused with the twilight redness of the crescent moon!

## 3. PRETERNATURAL DESCRIPTIONS

In our third variety, the *preternatural*, birds and mammals have actions attributed to them which belong to the world of fantasy and mythology. The crested cuckoo and the red partridge have abnormal drinking habits. The former slakes its thirst only with water from the clouds and the latter with the rays of the moon. The crested cuckoo (*cātaka*), according to an anonymous poet, spurns masses of water nectarine in taste, rouged with the pollen from beds of pink lotuses, and drinks only the water of the cloud, because the proud bird is unwilling to lower or bow its head. But other poets see this apparent pride as nothing else but the bird's devotion to the cloud, which it cherishes in spite of being cast from it by fierce winds, pounded by its hail, and struck on the eyes by its lightnings.

As for the red partridge (*cakora*), it drinks only moonbeams, the nectar which made the gods immortal. But the partridge, far from deriving immortality from its beverage, as Nilakaṇṭha Dīkṣita remarks, only becomes as emaciated as a leaf of straw. Who, queries the poet, can know the secret decrees of destiny? While the gods are rendered deathless by the moon's rays, separated lovers are often grievously tormented by the romantic feelings that their cool and mysterious luster evokes, and only the partridge can help alleviate their Partridges, exclaims Rajasekhara, drink all the liquid of the moon rays, with the straight-thrusting beaks of your upraised necks! Then the moon, its energy enfeebled, will spare the lives of those pained by separation. The heavenly partridge of Indra, Bilhaṇa tells us, does her work so thoroughly that the moon at dawn is drained of its brilliance, and looks as pale as a blossoming pandanus flower (*ketaka*).

Of all these preternatural descriptions the most surrealistic are derived, not from any bird or mammal, but from that most mysterious of reptiles, the serpent, at once a symbol of death and of deathlessness. This is especially true of the serpents associated with those deities of terror and death, Śiva and Kālī. Śiva's many-hooded serpent Vāsuki crowns the head of his master with its tower of matted hair, adorned by a chaplet of skulls and emblazed with the crescent moon. The circle of Vāsuki's hoods, according to an anonymous poet, under the overpowering weight of the jewels latent in each of their crests, leans low and hides the splendor of the crescent moon, while its body, passing through the cavities of the skulls, binds them together. In Bhavabhūti's picture of the dance of Kālī, perhaps the most terrifying in all of Sanskrit literature, the dancing goddess blasts the mountains with her many long arms enveloped in the flames of poison spitted out of the mouths of hissing black serpents, coiled like so many armlets around those arks, their hoods flaring with excitement when squeezed by those arms moved by the goddess in the violence of the dance.

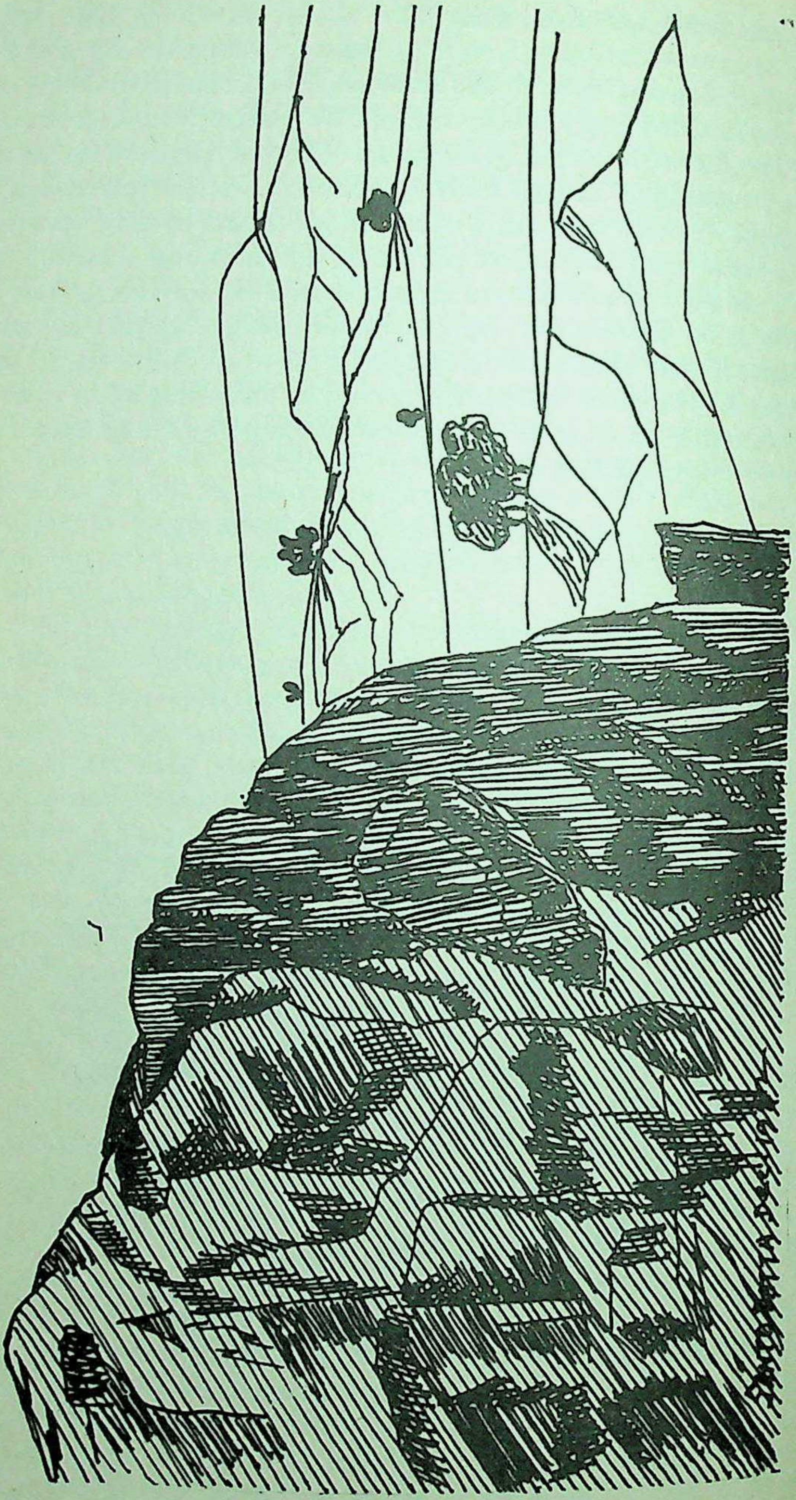
Not less preternatural is the behavior of animals in the presence of beings embodying supernatural power, like sages. Here again, one of the best descriptions is that of Bāṇa :

"Oh, the power of great souls !" exclaims our poet. "For here even the animals put aside their constant strife, and with tranquil souls, taste the joy of living in a forest of ascetics. Here the serpent, bothered by the heat, enters without alarm into a peacock's plumage, as into a plot of fresh grass, a plumage which recalls the pattern of a grove of blooming waterlilies, flashing with a hundred eyelets and speckled as with the light of a deer's eyes. Here a young antelope leaves its mother, makes friends with lion cubs whose manes have not yet grown, and drinks the stream of milk from the teats of the lioness. Here the lion closes his eyes and enjoys having the mass of his mane, white as the moonlight, pulled by young elephants that mistake it for a mass of lotus fibers. Here the monkeys put aside their natural tricks and bring fruit to young ascetics after their bath. Here too the elephants, though intoxicated by rut, grow kind and do not flap their ears and drive away the bees resting on their temples and motionless from having drunk the ichor".

The tranquillity, natural and preternatural, of the forest and its wildlife, is finally devastated by the human mammal, expert in the fabrication of lethal weapons and a specialist in slaughter, not only of animals but of his own kind. Though Sanskrit poets frequently celebrate hunts, they have sometimes reprimanded hunters. Vālmiki, traditionally renowned as the creator of classical Sanskrit poetry, cursed a hunter who shot mating curlews : that curse is said to have been the origin of the epic meter of Sanskrit poetry. In Kālidāsa's drama on Śakuntalā, two ascetics reprove a hunter and save the life of a harried deer. "No", one of them exclaims, "by no means must your arrow be shot into the soft body of the deer, like fire into a heap of flowers ! Oh where is the tremulous life of the deer, and where the sharp hail of your arrows of adamant !"

Here again, Bāṇa excels every other Sanskrit writer, if not every writer anywhere who has ever treated the topic, in evoking the pathos of animals savaged by hunters.

"Not long after", recounts the narrator of Bāṇa's novel, *Kādambarī*, "the forest was shaken on all sides by the roar of lions struck by mountaineers arrows, deepened by its echo reverberating from the hollows of mountains and strong as the roll of a newly-oiled drum; by the guttural roars of leader elephants forsaken by their frightened herds and wandering alone, roars resembling the rumble of clouds and mixed with the incessant lashings of their trunks; by the piteous cries of blackdoes, the pupils of their eyes restless, terrified and tremulous, as their limbs were being violently torn apart by dogs; by the screams of widowed elephants, lengthened by grief from the recent separation from their dead lords, followed by their young, pausing now and again, with raised ears, to listen to the din, and wandering here and there; by the bellowing of the rhinoceros cows, only recently delivered, pitifully calling with outstretched necks to their young, lost in the panic; by the outcry of birds flying from the treetops and roaming in confusion; by the sound of hunters' feet running in pursuit of game, seeming to cause an earthquake by their heavy and simultaneous pounding of the earth; by the twang of numberless arrows from bows drawn to the ear, muted like the cooing from the throats of impassioned ospreys; by the clash of swords, the sharp edges of their blades whizzing against the wind, falling on the hard shoulder blades of wild buffaloes; and by the baying of the hounds, penetrating the recesses of the forest, echoing with the sound of their impetuously emitted growls".



# A Writer's World

*Jehanara Wasi*

An established novelist and political journalist in English, Nayantara Sahgal has received a Sahitya Akademi Award for her novel *Rich Like Us*. New Delhi, one month after the declaration of the emergency is the setting for Sahgal's book. It is an ironic and well-crafted study of India and its people in the aftermath of independence. *Rich Like Us* is many individual histories, a compelling and vivid tapestry of India's past and present. It is the story of Sonali, an idealist, and Dev, an opportunist, Ravi Kachru, an erstwhile Marxist and Kishori Lal, a bloodied survivor of Partition. Rose, the Cockney memsahib, who has lived in India for over forty years, is neither wanted nor welcomed. In Sahgal's tale, with its humour and tragedy, is mirrored the entire Indian experience.

A passage from the novel reads:

"Conversation was a lake, milky and mild, the leisurely exchange of people on the winning side who don't have to lose their tempers in argument. The dictatorship around us was one of nature's marvels, not man-made, not 'made' at all. It had the naturalness, the mother-and child-ness of a crop and was cultivable. Or, in another variation, it had been unearthed, a brilliant archaeological find, evidence of the early blossoms of our culture, institutions that had endured, proof that family counted. What was wrong with a son succeeding his mother in this particular republic? And which mother anywhere in the world wouldn't move heaven and earth for her son?"

According to Sahgal, *Rich Like Us* "tells two stories instead of one. It spans more time. It is less conventional in the telling. I feel I was able to go through the looking glass more completely, see further and in more directions. I had lived with the main character and the background for many years."

*Plans for Departure* is about a young woman's rendezvous with

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India at a time (1914) when the status of both women and India was on the brink of change. It is a story that has come to have a certain predictability—the European confronted with the intensity and mystery of India also confronts some hitherto unconscious yearning in herself. The power struggle in Europe is about to break out into a cataclysm, Indian nationalist aspirations are taking on a revolutionary character and tremors reach the remote hill station of Himapur, along with Anna Hansen. She arrives fresh from London and is equipped with the simple indomitable independence we associate with the new woman of that era.

Sahgal writes with assurance, skill and humour. She has a contagious interest in the more ebullient aspects of twentieth century history, but fails to encompass its grimness. Anna's story begins with the romance of optimism and idealism, but that it should fade into a comforting family saga is unsatisfying. *Plans* for *Departure* is Sahgal's only book without a real political background. "It has political overtones and undertones too," she says, "but has little resemblance to anything I have written before. It has left me with the feeling that there are all kinds of fresh pastures ahead, and that in a sense, I have only just begun to write."

Sahgal maintains that all books come out of experience, one's own or other people's and all fiction veers away from its factual starting point as soon as it starts to be written. She observes: "The only novel I based on an actual event in my life—divorce—was *The Day in Shadow*. But except that Simrit divorced and was the victim of a wretched divorce settlement—and so was I—there the likeness between us ended."

The three heroines who project the new woman in *This Time of Morning*, *Storm in Chandigarh* and *The Day in Shadow* are respectively, Rashmi, Saroj and Simrit. In each case the attack is not against the institution of marriage, but against the inequality and injustice that is forced upon women by men using the institution of marriage. Fortunately, Rashmi has an enlightened father in Kailas, and he sympathises with her decision to leave her husband.

Nayantara Sahgal was born an aristocrat very much in the upper reaches of society surrounded by beauty, intelligence and, above all, a depth of commitment which sent her parents to jail in the Indian independence struggle. As she grew up she saw politics from the inside. Jawaharlal Nehru was her uncle, her mother, Vijayalakshmi Pandit, widowed because her father died from illness brought on in prison, a tough ambassador. This world is implicit in her novels. It is also implicit in her style. Here there is nothing extreme but an educated and skilful use of the English language in which there is never any question of her not being at home, although like a true citizen of the world, she clearly knows other languages and cultures too. This being so, she looks benevolently on other people's religions so long as they are honest and gentle, but religious motives scarcely enter her novels. Her characters are not "believers" although they may go through certain rites for social ends. *This Time of Morning* is the world of upper class Indian politics described with the confidence of one who has watched, questioned and seen through the normal pretensions and exaggerations. And of course this is clear from her two delightful volumes of autobiography, *Prison and Chocolate Cake* and *From Fear Set Free.*

But also it makes a difference being beautiful, which she was stunningly as a girl and so still is among her daughters. It is a matter of confidence, of never having felt basically unstable. Certainly it creates difficulties, but not so many as it smoothes out. It would be hard for Nayantara to write about an ugly woman; a character may be elderly or have put on weight, but she knows how to wear a sari to the best advantage.

Sahgal is and is not a New Delhi woman. Certainly she can write about the top people who would not consider living anywhere else except of course for the hills or sometimes Europe or America in the hot weather, and her writing has a certain bite. She is in real life an excellent hostess without the lavishness of the rich, whom she sometimes describes. But she and her characters are conscious of the span of India's history. In one of her books her main character, remembering administrators whose spare time had gone not on ladder climbing but on the arts, and even the sciences, thinks: "Delhi had downgraded leisure." Nayantara's background is anciently civilised Indian, not always completely absorbing or understanding alien aesthetics, but with its own standards. Yet there are scenes from another life, for instance, in *Storm in Chandigarh,* the hideous childhood of Gyan Singh in the garage among the Sikh drivers.

*A Situation in New Delhi* describes a period of political vacuum, when Shivraj, the eminent politician and Prime Minister had died in India and there is no one else able enough to take his place, Shivraj's sister, Devi remembers nostalgically her brother's performance in free India. Other political systems now attempt to assert themselves. One such system is pursued by Rishad, Devi's son. Rishad's ideology is one of violence, of rapid change, of shock. According to him, parliamentary rule has not done enough for the country. Rishad is sharply contrasted against his mother, Devi: "Even his mother believed that things should go on more or less as before. The star of her generation had been freedom, a sacred world for her. But Rishad had been born free, in a world he could not accept. He had to change it."

Shivraj is dead but lives on through those who still accept his values such as Usman and Devi. Usman and Devi both give up their job, Devi as Education Minister in the new government and Usman as Vice-Chancellor of Delhi University, to carry on the revolution that will largely consist of fighting the present inertia. To jolt the community, Usman takes to the streets with those students of his university who will follow him. He tells Devi: "You can't make a revolution in thin air. It has to come from the ground under your feet, your own ground. The State owns the big guns. Any confrontation with it, if it is to succeed, must be non-violent. There never was another way. Besides, do you realise it is the only way people in this country understand and will give their allegiance to?"

The last line in the novel records the impressions of Michael Calvert who is writing a biography of Shivraj. He has just seen Usman leaving Devi's house, after having informed her of the demonstration of students against the government that he had organised at the university. Michael watches Usman and the image of Shivraj flashes through his mind. We read: "And Michael thought, perhaps we've been in too much of a hurry to say he is dead." So Shivraj lives on.

When Ananda Bhawan was converted into a memorial, Nayantara Sahagl was asked by *The Hindustan Times* to recall memories of her home. This extract conveys her personal feeling for the house and the climate it provided for the children and adults who belonged to it: "I felt a special kinship with the house. It was as old as I was. It had been built when my grandfather gave his palatial residence to the Congress Party. Our love and admiration for Jawaharlal Nehru was inextricably entwined with the soil and stones of Anand Bhawan. Both seemed enveloped in the radiance of purpose, both wide open to the world, nothing is either limited to the purely personal. Nor was there anything grim or glum about either. Even the people who came and went, villagers, town workers, university students, the little known as well as the galaxy of leaders, had a buoyancy and gaiety of spirit. Never was history made with the joy of living so amply woven into it... Even a child felt it, sitting on the verandah after dinner, the floor still warm from a day of sun, looking up at the stars. 'I'll never let it down; I promised the stars. I'll carry it everywhere as long as I live".

Nayantara Sahgal's work is invariably vivid, challenging and modern. She is a good example of an Indian woman writer who is well aware of her forbears, but perfers to look forward rather than back for her inspiration.

# Ten Poems

*Shiv K. Kumar*

## Birth of Eve
*(God's Monologue)*

'And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of the ribs, and closed up the flesh thereof.'

Though Adam hearkened to my voice
during waking hours
in his dreams he always broke loose
into conjuring up the vision
of a strange creature -
a bosom with two moons,
shoulders like mute doves,
eyes that spellbind a pansy -
and in her gait the swing of a dancing peacock.

I never took it as a breach of the covenant -
only his aching loneliness.
In his dream alone, I felt, he should
be redeemed. So as he lay slumbering,
propped up on a bed of lilies,
I took off a rib closest to his heart.

There he stirs up at sunrise to greet
his vision with fireflies in his eyes,
and gazelles capering in his heart.

Two pairs of eyes tamed by a code,
two pairs of hands that may rise only in prayer,
two bodies that may move only in concentric
circles, never converging on desire.

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But does he know that this creature
of honey and vinegar
may someday lead him
into disheritance?

## Clouds

Merely to christen them
each in its discrete poise
is to break into song.

Once prompted, they run on to
the oratorio s end — each word
and gesture simulating your needs.

Often they improvise like a saxophonist,
or a smoker blowing rings that dissipate
into a dream of shreds -
a foetus caught in a spider's web,
a deer circling wantonly round its musk.

Once their hungers steam up
they merely rumble. They mate
like tuskers — slowly, gracefully,
deferentially. Not snorting, stamping,
charging like bulls. Just melting
into each other till all red, blue
and grey is one vast landscape of white.

Above all, it's their discernment -
they'd let the sun break through when
a child is on the zebra crossing,
or drop a veil when a woman steals
out for a rendezvous.

Not even saints, limited in their choice,
ever pause to look about.

But if you've once mated on the thistle-down
beds of clouds, their mirrors
will never betray you.

Their only enemies are the sun's malignant
stare, the wind's violent jostle.
But to fade away is not to die
for there's always resurrection.

## Sunset Over Simla Hills

Only a god can do harakiri at dusk
as a rite of ablution
with the eagles singing the requiem.

The sun's gonfalons are already flying
half-mast over the day's hearse.

Yonder, over the hill, a mist
born of some lethal concoction,
rises above the pines
to muzzle all desire.

There are no horizons here
to prolong the ceremony of retreat.
Just one dip behind the hilltop
and it's done.

## A Woman Labourer Breast-feeding her Baby, During Lunch Break

Each week day the body's two seasons
intersect at noon — the grey winter
of drudge that tempers
cement with sweat

and the green interlude of the sun -
burst when toothless gums
strike milk out of rock.
Anger subsides -
the day rests at anchor.

Under her head-veil, now dropped
to cover two moons, wee hands
and feet flutter like a culver.

Time that never ceases to nibble
at stone, wood or glass
now pricks up its ears to listen
to a heart-throb.

## A Stray Cow

When the milk runs into red sand
and the udders shrivel into an infant's knuckles
you may hobble past any door cloaked in anonymity.

You may munch an obituary column
from a yesterday's newspaper
in a garbage can
and dream of an ancestor against whose
haunches Lord Krishna often reclined
and fluted the universe into a swing.
it's only when you stray into the crossroads
of life and hold up someone trafficking
in sin that you may get poked in the sides
and shooed away with a brusque "tut-tut!"

## My Adolescent Son's Room

Spiraling up and down the walls
of a death-well, the winged spiderman
rides a nuclear powered motor-bike,
his eyes riveted on the distant vision
of a bright-plumed dove that croons
each night into his dreams.

From the corners of this room,
two speakers hurl defiance at the world
in the crush notes of Mike Johnson

while some books, untouched like nuns,
perch demurely, waiting for even a side-glance.

At the door shrieks out a poster:
'Enter ye at your own risk!'

## At a Whorehouse

In this infrared room, the mirror
is a spy, signalling
to the street lamps.

With the door now bolted
and the key swallowed by you,
I'm done for.

I guess it's all the same
sleeping on a spiked bed
like a yogi, or letting your coffee
nipples dirk into my breast.
Either way leads to nirvana.

I know I must taste the cold ash
like my ancestors. But don't hustle
me. Let me first come to,
after the day's acier logic.

You should have forged some communion
before unleashing the fierce
vendetta of your body. A new convert
needs time to intone an exotic chant.

Can you rock me into forgetting
a woman who once promised me
manna in the tulip of her mouth?
But this is asking for more
than the deal. So let me go.

Already I hear my mother
crying over a Caesarian
gasping in his incubator.

## Dal Lake : Srinagar

Is it some primeval crystal—multi-hued?
Or is there stacked under its weeded archives,
some chronicle of creation and doom? Did it witness
the birth of our first man, fish and flora —
and will it see the last sunset when the king -
fisher will dive below its waters
never to spring again?

It's daybreak — the moment of embrace
between rose and briar, dream and reality,
faith and negation.

Slowly rises the curtain on a sequence
of mountains, overlooking a lambent platter
of virgin waters as though
this morning has just been midwifed
out of the womb of time.

The sunlight now caresses the camel-caravan
of hilltops, their necks drooping,
their humps bobbing up and down
like the cardiograph of some stout heart
at peace with itself.

Now breaks into this hushed moment,

the symphony of birds, still drunk
on some dreams of luscious orchards.

And as the chinars, stately like turbaned watchmen,
wave to the dawn, their palm-shaped leaves
swinging in the air, the mist rises, diffusing all over
the landscape, like an incense from some ancient ritual.

The patriarchal sun now splinters
into a hundred eyes, each prying through a shred
of white cloud, like the clipped feather
of some primordial swan.

The glow deepens –
the peacock blue waters hold up their mirrors
to encore, in inverted images,
the mountains, the clouds, the chinars, the birds –
all shimmering in a vision, bifocal.

Now perched on the steps of a ghat, just a heart-
beat away from Hazratbal, I see islets of chestnut,
of lotus, anchored tranquilly.
And suddenly, out there, my eye seizes
some dark object approaching. A prophet
walking on the waters? A spectral skiff propelled
by lunar force? No, it's a fisherwoman, rowing
her little ark with a heart-shaped oar,
over the waters that lisp and gurgle and kiss,
as she hauls in her first catch of the day –
fish, faith and endurance.

Now the rumblings of unrest
as the morning lengthens into the day
the crows' cawing
the ducks' whack-whacking
the muezzin's croon
and on the market-square, the first taxi
snorts into action.

Time for the tourists — alien or native,
white or dark, to swoop down upon Dal,
like locusts, scrambling for the shikaras,
baptised 'Prince Abdulla,' 'Cautious America',
'Pan Am,' 'Lady of Nagina.'

Incensed by these goings-on, the sun blares.
As I confront it with my eyes shut,

a film of hot redness descends within their sockets —
goblets of garnet blood,
sanguine irritants from the workaday world.

But the Dal waters are neutral.
You may defile them, or hold up a palmful
to the sun like soma,
or peer into their caverns for oracular answers
to any questions —
for isn't this lake a conjuror's crystal too?

## A Wayside Shiva Temple

Anonymity shrouds every rock
until the sun's chisels sculpt
it into a god.

A wayside, lingam-shaped boulder
behind which I once kneaded a woman's body,
cannot now look me straight in the eye.

Some ingenious hand has cleansed it
with plantain leaves, bathed it in cow's milk,
ensconced it in brick and mortar,
securing it behind an iron railing
so that even the sun can no longer see
its progeny grown into a legend :

This morning, before the first wayfarer
could stop by to make his offering,
I peered through the bars to ask
if it remembered me still,
and if it longed to be wind-swept, rain-washed-
and stripped under the candid sky.

## The Dead Can Speak

(A friend's letter, arriving after his death)

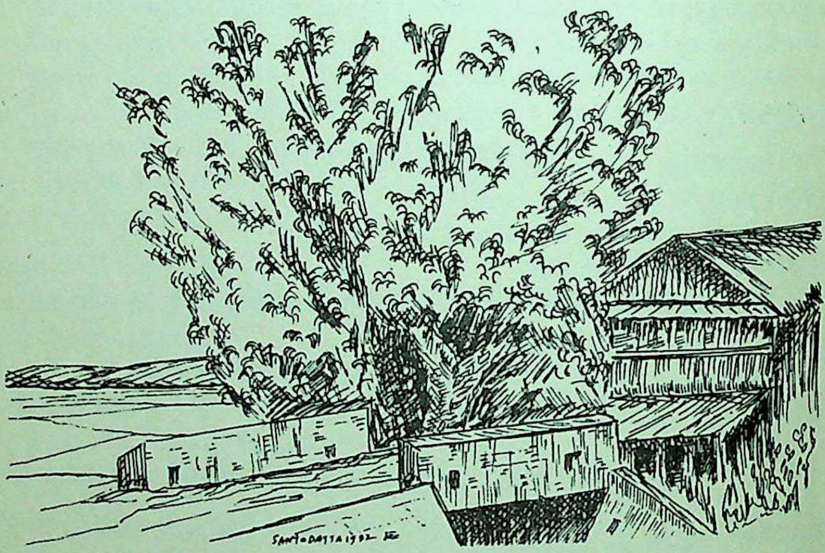
An ebony-plumed bird —
or a soul in flight —
has just dropped your letter in my mail-box.

Or is it some spy
passing on a classified message
from the other world?

Your sentences blur in my eye's moisture,
your words metamorphose into riddles.
A face surfaces from the page
like a dead fish — its silver belly bloated
and taut — its eyes frozen in insentience.

I smell the odour of wilted flowers,
flames gorging on ghee —
ashes and bones.

"I look forward to seeing you soon" —
but where — and how?
You should have known by now
that the living are blinkered and rudderless.
They need escorting down the dark alleyways
to the rendezvous.



# JUSTICE

*Indira Parthasarathy*

I met Janus Walton at a wedding. The church and civil ceremony of the brother of one of my students — a girl — took place in Warsaw. The reception was in the village.

It is difficult to say whether the invitation was for lunch during the day or dinner at night. It was a continuous affair. The tables were set at 3 in the afternoon and groaned with food and Vodka. Eating and drinking went on till the next morning, interspersed with singing and dancing. The food and drink punctuated the revelries.

At 6 in the evening I told my student that it was time I left. She said: "If you leave now the hosts may feel offended."

"What time can I leave?"

"Tomorrow morning....."

My head was reeling. "What am I to do till then?"

"Do as others do....."

"I do not have the stamina of the Slav people".

She smiled. "Come with me I shall introduce you to an interesting person."

That is how I met Walton.

My first guess that he was about 60 years old was wrong. I learnt later that he was 75. There was no trace to show that his head ever had hair on it. His smiling face and general appearance indicated a good constitution. He hurt my hands when he shook them firmly.

My student not only introduced me but repeated what I had said about the Slav people.

He laughed loudly. "Stamina is not a matter of the body only; it depends on the mind also. Look at that girl who is dancing so happily. Last year at about this time she attempted suicide," he said.

"I know so little about things like leaving a party at the right time or attempting suicide."

He smiled. He put his hand on my shoulder. "People who are not

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strong of mind tire easily. Why do you want to go home so early? You are obviously bored. Come with me and I shall see that you are not bored."

"Why did the girl attempt suicide?"

"Why is she so happy now? When we are happy we do not ask why. We are only aware that we are happy. When we are unhappy we keep on asking why and we feel compelled to do something about it. It is my mission to teach people how to be happy...."

I learnt later that he was running a Rehabilitation Centre for people who have been cured of mental illness. The Centre organised performances of music, dance, drama etc. There were facilities for playing football, table tennis etc. He did not call it a rehabilitation centre. He referred to it as the Creative Centre.

Janus was a good musician. He was adept at classical music as well as jazz. Though he was not specially fond of pop music, he encouraged those at the centre who were interested. A well-qualified music teacher in Vienna before the Second World War, he had known and had contacts with several Freudian philosophers and psychologists. He told me that a large number of them had been killed in Hilter's concentration camp at Auschwitz in Poland. When the war was over Walton moved to France and America but somehow could not settle down. He returned to Poland.

He was one of the very few lucky ones to come out of Auschwitz alive. His wife died there. The German military authorities never told him what happened to their three-year-old daughter. He thought she must have been killed. Many had asked him to write a book about his experiences in Auschwitz but he had firmly declined.

"Where do you fix the blame when a whole nation goes crazy under the spell of one man whether accidentally or through historical conspiracy or by a decree of fate? Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Hungary, Vietnam, El Salvador—don't these things continue to happen? To believe that people learn from history is to believe in fiction. My primary concern now is to do what I can to help individual people and not write a book to teach organised groups." This was the reason, Janus said, why he refused to write a book.

I remember as though it was yesterday the first time I went with him to his Creative Centre.

A game of chess was in progress; some were absorbed in their books; a knot of youngsters sat around a guitar player—Janus introduced me.

I tried my hand at table tennis for a while and retired to a chair near the window to look at some newspapers. An elderly man entered, sat opposite me and smiled. I returned the smile.

"Are you an Indian?"

"Yes......"

"They say the whole of India is a vast jungle?"

I was not sure whether he came to this conclusion after reading Indian newspapers or whether this was his knowledge of geography.

"Not all of India. There are forests in some parts—."

"Where do you live? In the forests or ..... ?

"In Delhi. I cannot specify if it is a jungle or city—."

"I like the jungle very much. I come from the North-Eastern part of Poland; Mazur area. There are plenty of forests there. Have you ever visited the place?"

"No."

He stared at me. I was obviously to be pitied.

When he left, a middle-aged man joined me. He pulled out a packet of cigarettes and offered me one.

"I do not smoke."

"Why do you refuse to eat beef?"

"Who? Me?"

"Not you. Generally, Indians........."

"I personally do not eat beef. In fact I do not eat meat of any kind. In general Hindus do not eat beef."

"Why?"

"The cows do not eat us. Why should we eat them?"

He was thoughtful as he smoked. After a while he said "This is a problem. If we are to eat only those animals that eat us, then we should eat lions, tigers, bears etc. Can we?"

"I see it'll be difficult........"

"Particularly hedge-hog! Without the hedge may be we can eat it," he said seriously.

As he was turning over this thought in his mind with eyes closed, I quickly left him.

Janus smiled at me over a file he was perusing.

"How do you like this place?"

"Are all the people here cured?"

"It depends on what you mean by cured. They are happy. To the extent necessary they adjust to the world."

"It is sufficient if one is resolved to ask for nothing more than adjustment to the world to the extent necessary. But, in fact, wihout even a remote notion of what is success in life, we chase illusions and console ourselves somehow."

Janus looked at me as if to say "You are using more words to say the same thing."

My friendship with Walton became an object of curiousity and debate among my Indian friends. "May be, this man Walton was himself mentally sick and has been cured" said a friend. Another said, "It is doubtful if he has been really cured."

"We are not surprised that you and Walton are such friends", they told me.

They had good reason. I had once invited them to my house to meet Janus who had told me he'd like to meet some Indians.

After introductions, Janus asked them: "What do you think about Martial Law in Poland?"

"There is no problem. We work in the Embassy. We get everything—rice, wheat, meat, drinks. What more dome want?"

"You don't want anything else?"

"Of course we want dal, chilli powder, masala powder etc. These are not always available in Warsaw—but in Berlin we can get them in plenty. And, going to Berlin is not a problem."

Janus did not speak to them after that. They asked him some questions but he curtly replied he did not know.

"Why do you refuse to talk to us?" they asked.

"There is nothing to say. I don't think conversation is possible with you........."

After my friends left, Janus asked: "Are they your friends?"

"Yes, I don't see anything wrong with them. They are average human beings. There are many such people in Poland also."

"I commend your patriotism," said Janus.

"I am not just patriotic—I am objectve."

I told Janus what my Indian friends had said about him. He smiled. "A girl at the Centre once asked me why the people outside are not normal? I am reminded for her question now."

"Did she include me in 'people outside'?"

"No, She thought you showed some signs of normalcy."

From what I have said about him, you would have a mental picture of Janus Walton—a man of self-confidence, with a sense of humor, who had the ability to meet life's rebuffs with a smile.

It is difficult to frame a human being by clear definition and limits. Instead of telling you what Walton said or did, let me just narrate what happened.

One day at five in the morning I received a phone call from Walton's house. A woman's voice said: "Please come at once."

"Why?"

"Janus Walton wants to see you."

"What happened to him? Why does'nt he talk to me on the phone?"

"Please come at once and you will see."

I went.

Janus was lying on a bed. He looked ten years older. He smiled when he saw me but it was a smile of resignation. I wondered what had happened to him.

A woman, about 40 or a little older, was sitting beside him. She was a stranger to me. I had not seen her at the Centre either. She spoke broken English. When I spoke in Polish she did not reply. Perhaps she was not Polish, I thought.

I asked Janus: "What is wrong with you?"

He signalled to the woman to leave the room. Her face clearly showed she did not like it. However, she left.

Janus was silent for a few moments. "Nothing is wrong with me. Do you know what happened?"

"Tell me."

"I attempted suicide."

I was startled. "You?"

"Yes, me. But for this woman it would have been the end of the chapter. She is also the reason why I attempted suicide."

"I do not understand."

Walton remained silent with eyes closed.

The woman brought tea into the room. It was made after the Polish fashion—a few tea leaves in a glass and hot water over it.

"Well, sit down" Walton said to the woman in German.

She looked a little happier.

Walton began to talk to me in English.

"I had a dream last night. I am not sure if it was a dream. It is difficult to separate reality from dream and perhaps the attempt to do so is futile. I visualise the events at Auschwitz. I see children being dragged to the gas chamber in front of my eyes. Some young men are lined up against the Wall of Death to be shot. I see prisoners sleeping in small narrow cells, being prodded awake by boots for labour outside. I see a man, who can bear the agony no more, running towards the electrified barbed wire to be burnt to death. I see the guards shooting at him as if to make sure that he really is dead. You may have heard of all this. These are true happenings. I see them happening again. They are asking an old Jewish priest to spit on the Jewish holy book which they hold in front of him. A young Nazi hero supervises all this even as he is reading a book of poetry. When the priest stops spitting, he growls: "Why have you stopped? Is your throat dry? Here, take this." He spits on the priest's face.

"You may wonder whether such things really happened. They did. Last night I saw it all again. They say that literature, music and civilisation nurture human qualities. This is a lie. Auschwitz proved it. The music of Wagner accompanied rows of children walking to the gas chamber. Bach was being played as young men were lined up against the Wall of Death. Who said that Nazis lacked artistic sense? What I saw yesterday was not a dream. It was real. There is reason to think so."

"What reason?"

"I had hidden on my person some sleeping pills when in Auschwitz. These tablets—not used when I was in Auschwitz—I swallowed yesterday. That is what happened."

"How do you know these are the same tablets?"

"Because I do not keep any other".

"Are you sure you swallowed them?"

"They made me violently sick: my head ached unbearably. The stomach was in a turmoil."

"How did you get over it then? Did you take any counter tablets?"

"No, it is a wonder that I got well. This woman massaged my stomach. That was all."

I looked at the woman. She smiled.

"Do you know who this woman is?"

"No, you have not introduced me."

"It is my daughter".

"Your daughter!"

"Yes, I thought the Nazis had killed her. I was wrong. A Jew who escaped from Auschwitz took her with him. He went to Russia and later to Israel. My daughter grew up in Israel. Only on his death-bed he told her who she was. That was about ten years ago. Since then she has been looking for me everywhere and came here last night."

"You should be happy that your daughter came to you. Why should you do this then?"

"The reason is — the news she brought. What the Nazis did to the Jews, the Jews are now doing today to the Arabs on the West Bank. You know yourself what atrocities were committed in Beirut. I was enraged."

"Not only you. Everybody is."

"Specially me. Do you know why? Because I am a Jew. Don't you understand?"

I had had enough shocks for one day.

"Tell me, are you sure you did not dream the whole thing last night?" I said.

"I am a Jew. I believe in miracles. I can say no more."

*(Translated from the Tamil*
*by* **M.R. Sivarama Krishnan***)*

# Blind

## *Manohar Shetty*

Raman sat in the crowded compartment, squashed between two passengers. It was a breezy morning, but stuffy inside; he felt like a sandwich-filling. There was the usual smell of armpit sweat, and the vaguely fecal odours which blow in from outside as the train clipped along, stopping now and then to swallow up even more passengers. Raman looked around desultorily. He knew all the stencilled warnings on the compartment walls by heart; even the advertisement for detergents, mosquito repellants and abortion clinics never seemed to vary. And the card players, with a briefcase on their knees serving as a table. Only the stakes and the hands changed. Some of them, he'd been told, took the train even on Sundays and holidays merely to play rummy. They went all the way to VT, and took the same train back to their destinations. Perhaps, Raman thought, their wives didn't allow them to gamble at home.

He fanned himself with a newspaper, and glanced at his watch: he would be well in time for the bank. He had woken up fifteen minutes late today, and considered himself lucky to have caught his usual train. He unfolded the newspaper, and turned to the crossword. He had filled in only one across and three downs. By this time, usually, he would have been chewing his ballpoint over the last few clues. But this morning Raman couldn't concentrate. Something was bothering him, but he couldn't pin down the cause of it. It wasn't the packed train, the odours and the card players. All these he'd grown inured to with years of commuting. It was something else, a hazy, curling wisp of foreboding which worried him.

He turned to the front page and an item titled 'Gale Winds Expected' caught his attention. He read it through, and turned again to the crossword. The unfilled blanks stared up at him. He looked outside the window and noticed two crows being hurled back by a stiff breeze. The high winds had already started.

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The crossword was left undone and the feeling of unease persisted, stuck lightly as a burr in his mind, when he got off at VT. In a moment, he was just another black dot in the throbbing, mingling hordes that turned the platform into a gigantic, moving crossword puzzle.

When he took his place at the bank in Nariman Point, Raman was still tense and abstracted. With his oblong spectacles, unkempt hair, and biggish head set on a thin body (the crueller among the staff referred to him as Mr Lollipop), Raman invariably wore an absent, forgetful look. Today, poring over figures in a general ledger, his mind wandered more than usual, and even Leela who sat next to him, and whom the more gossipy linked romantically to Raman, looked at him quizzically.

'Something bothering you, Raman?' she asked.

'No, no, nothing really.... Actually, there is, but I can't seem to get to the bottom of it.'

'Ah, it will all come back quite suddenly, and when you least expect it. Don't think about it', Leela said, and smiled at him.

Raman was by nature a fretful, foregetful sort. Often, after locking up the flat in the morning, he would hurry back to it midway to the railway station to check if he had closed the door securely. Milk boiling over was a regular occurrence; once, he had even forgotten to switch off the water heater, and it was only the acrid smell of burning that had startled him out of his thoughts. On another occasion, Raman paid twice for the same bus journey. Absorbed in a word game in an evening paper, he had forgotten that he had already paid for a ticket.

Raman was overly suspicious of the reliability of his reflex actions. Things such as closing doors, switching off fans, lights, heaters and irons, buying tickets in a bus, collecting the cigarette packet he'd just paid for at a stall—all these instinctive actions which people are hardly ever bothered by—were, for Raman, often a trying experience of recollection. It was not that his responses let him down frequently. Invariably, after the trek back to his flat, he would find that the door had indeed been locked, and the fans and lights switched off. And after swearing over yet another cigarette packet he thought he'd left behind at the counter, he'd discover it, with sheepish surprise, right there, clutched in his left hand. But given his absentmindedness, Raman, of course, lost a great many handkerchiefs, matchboxes and ballpoints in buses, trains, taxis and restaurants. On this occasion Raman had a faint inkling that there was something amiss in the flat he lived in. His mind went back to his morning routine. Mentally, he tried to tabulate all that he'd done. But his late-rising that morning had thrown his routine into confusion.

He was unable to remember everything. He turned back to the ledger. The figures wavered before him in a haze.

Suddenly a window swung open with a crash, and in the strong wind the pages of the ledger were riffled through his fingers like cards in a cardsharper's hands.

'Damn!' he heard someone say, 'the weather forecast seems right this time.'

Raman remembered the report he'd read. He heard snatches of conversation. Some of the office staff were talking of the office closing early today because of the gale.

He looked out of the window. Seven storeys below, on the street, he could see people struggling, heads bowed, against the wind. Their shirts and sarees clung tightly to them and fluttered in their wake like banners. He noticed that the sea was rough, a snorting, phlegm-coloured mass flinging itself against the sea-wall. It had begun to rain too, an angry, smarting drizzle bullied about by the wind. Raman saw a few umbrellas turned inside out as people hurried for shelter. The rain pummelled a shut window of the bank, and dribbled over the glass and the frames. Watching the panes, Raman was reminded of a fat, bespectacled face suddenly bursting into tears.

Then, far away, he saw a bright, mushroom shaped object detached itself from the high storey of a five-star hotel. It swung out sideways, righted itself in a swirling wind, and flashed over the roofs of the skyscrapers, teetering wildly out towards the see like a parachute gone out of control. It was some moments before he realised that it was a beach umbrella from the hotel's open-air swimming pool that had been wrenched free by the strong winds. Several others also crowded around the window, watching the flailing, rainbow-coloured canopy as it, finally, dropped slowly into the sea, and bobbed away. Raman, for some reason, thought of a clown staging a mock drowning. He noticed, too, the excitement on the faces of the bank employees, with a palpable tremor of apprehension. The manager emerged from his cabin, and soon an announcement was made that the bank would close at lunch time.

After the bank had closed, Raman sat in the canteen. Even with the threatening gale, he wanted to escape the home-bound rush. He ordered a soda. The table was sticky with rings left behind by tea-cups and soft-drink bottles. He looked around the nearly deserted canteen. The window with a background of trees was a pair of highlights in his spectacles. A waiter passed by. The troubling leech of worry still clung to Raman's mind. He saw the waiter turning off the cooking gas and tightening the knob on the cylinder. Raman looked idly at the red, bulbous cylinder. The wind hummed past the cracked window panes. The tumbler of soda water he'd ordered suddenly toppled over the counter. He saw it fall almost in slow motion; arrested by a frightening spectacle, his eyes saw the sodawater frothing over the rim of the glass as it rolled sideways through the air. Raman sprang from his chair, and raced to the canteen door. He didn't hear the crack of the tumbler as it splintered on the flecked tiles. The fragments of glass rocked for a moment in the lacy liquid, the bubbles popping open like subterranean eyes.

Outside, the wind stormed into Raman. His shirt ballooning out from under his outsized head, he looked widly around for a taxi. He ran from one street to another, but all the taxis he saw were full. The wind scudded around him and the drizzle snapped in glittering pins against his spectacles. The zebra-crossing shone like hide as he rushed past a green traffic light. He heard horns and hurrying footfalls. The bus queue for VT straggled away in a milling queue. He ignored it, and walked and ran, ran and walked breathlessly, panic clouding his mind, towards the railway station. The faces of hurrying passersby swam before him in unreal close-up—all bloated and misshapen.

At last he was in the churning, cavernous belly of the terminus, panting, looking at the clocks. He heard a speaker announcing a delay in the trains. Raman stared in fearful disbelief at the grey, funnel-like speaker. He leant back against a grimy wall, the hordes of commuters swarming around him. He looked up at the high ceiling of the station. The rusty crisscross of beams overhead were like the ribs of a gutted building. Raman shut his eyes and saw a gas cylinder in his kitchen explode into flames. He saw the fire licking away at a pile of newspapers, at curtains, blankets and mattresses. He saw an angry tongue of flame slithering out from under the door of his house, and eating its way to the next door flat. He heard alarm bells, and panicstricken screams. He saw an entire building ablaze, and dark mushrooming clouds moving towards the sky......

At last, a train began to creak out of the station. He dashed towards it, and managed to get a foothold as it left the platform. He hung on to the edge of the compartment, clinging to an overhead strap. His hair, flattened by the rushing wind, resembled a skullcap.

An hour later, the train stopped at his destination. Disgorged from the compartment onto the platform, Raman looked fearfully in the direction of his building. The wind and rain had stopped, and Raman, with a hollow, nauseous sensation, noticed smokelike patches standing stilly in the air. He joined the rush at the exit, and was lucky to get an autorickshaw as soon as he was out on the pavement.

He sat hunched in a corner of the rickshaw, his clenched fists resting on his knees. His knuckles were a taut translucence; his heart banged about wildly. Dimly, he thought of his forgetfulness as a weird abnormality. The rickshaw bleated to a halt at a red traffic light. He stared dazedly at the wall-eyed signal as the seconds thumped away. When it changed to green it was as if his will had beaten back something malevolent.

The journey itself was a short one, and again he felt a weightless, nauseous sensation in his head as the autorickshaw turned into his lane.

His fingers unclenched slowly as if in supplication as he caught sight of the grey bulk of the building. He looked unbelievingly at the solid, impassive structure, his feverish eyes scanning the fifth floor where he lived. There was nothing unusual there; no blackened windows or scorched walls. He noticed that both the kitchen windows were wide open. He stumbled out of the rickshaw and paid the driver.

Slowly he climbed the stairs, sniffing the air for cooking gas. He fumbled with the keys and pushed the door open. He stepped into the sparsely-furnished sitting-room. It looked as if it had been ransacked. Newspapers and magazines lay scattered everywhere, two chairs had been overturned, a tablelamp had crashed to the floor, and the door leading to the balcony swung loosely on twisted hinges. Raman hurried to the kitchen. At the threshold, he gaped at the gas stove, the smooth chromium gleamed benignly at him, the plastic knob was 'On'.

He sprang towards the stove, his shoes crunching fragments of crockery. He twisted the knob back, and sniffed the air, his nostrils flared open like an animal's. He smelt nothing. He saw his shapeless, bloated face reflected in the shining chromium. He rapped the cylinder with his knuckles. It echoed hollowly. Then, he turned the knob again and nervously lit a match over the stove. The match flickered out.

He noticed the empty kitchen shelves, and looked out of the window. Far below, in the compound, he saw a glint of steel utensils. He looked up towards the sky, and the few shreds of blue between the clouds. He noticed the smokelike patches he had seen from the station rising slowly in the air, and realised it was smog from the industrial belt nearby—smog he had seen ever since he had moved into the flat.

He wondered what eventually happened to windblown cooking gas.

The next morning was a blue vividness, a sheer curtain on the events of the past hours. Raman read the newspaper. It spoke of the weather gods having been kind to Bombay: the city had escaped with only a passing slap of the gale winds. Raman liked the words 'weather gods. They were like a chant in his mind when he boarded the 8.35 local to VT. This morning he finished the crossword without much effort.

Raman loved Saturdays. He liked the idea of working till lunch time, and then losing himself in himself for the rest of the day. His Saturday routine rarely wavered, and today it was no different. After work he sat on a bench facing the sea at Marine Drive, read through all the afternoon papers and worked on all the crosswords and word games in them. Then, he walked to his favourite restaurant and ate an elaborate lunch. After lunch, he strolled to one of the theatres nearby for the three o'clock show.

Raman, in fact, saw three or four films every week. The reviews in the evening papers never bothered him. He lost himself equally in the most banal and the most profound happenings on the screen. It would be true to say that he lived in a world of his own. His biggish head with its sparse hair and wide brow which gave him a scholarly look actually teemed with the most improbable scenarios and fancies. His mind was a giant screen perpetually flickering with fantastic images of himself. It was these fantasies which gave him his preoccupied appearance, and were the cause of his habitual forgetfulness. Along with his crosswords and word games, this glittering screen acted as an inviolable veil against the world, against sniggering nicknames like Mr Lollipop.

Coupled with this vicarious existence was Raman's complete lack of ambition or purpose in life. He was a genuine escapist. He had refused a promotion in the bank because he wanted no additional responsibilities. For the same reason, he rejected proposals of marriage brought about by his mother, who, to his immense relief, lived in a distant village near Bangalore and never visited Bombay. And, like a true escapist, he steered well clear of anything unpleasant. He walked right past street accidents and even blind men tapping for help to cross a road. At any sign of an incipient quarrel in a bar or a restaurant, Raman would be the first to make his exit. He was content with his magical purdah, his crosswords and word games. He had even bought a black and white TV on instalments, and every Sunday he sat before the flickering screen from morning till late night, unmoving, except to eat an occasional sandwich, the willing victim of electronic mesmerism.

This Saturday evening, Raman emerged from the theatre a refreshed man. Memories of the fortuitously averted disaster had died out, replaced by the usual diet of farfetched heroisms and giddy liaisons. He whiled away a couple of hours in a library, reading magazines and foreign newspapers. Later, he joined a small crowd watching a funambulist near Cross Maidan. The funambulist, balancing himself with a long pole, almost fell over on a couple of occasions. Watching the twisted toes clamped around the tightrope, Raman was reminded of a deformed foot. He tossed a coin into a basket, and walked to another theatre. Two films on a Saturday evening was not out of the ordinary for him.

He bought a ticket, and went inside into the cool foyer well before the main show. He looked at the brilliantly coloured posters advertising forthcoming films and at the stills pinned in glass cases. Soon, in the darkened rows of the auditoriums, Raman was just another pair of gleaming, flickering eyes.

It was past midnight when he left the theatre. He walked towards VT in the humid night, his shadow multiplied weirdly by the neon lights. Presently, the ornate, greyish bulk of the station loomed over him. He entered the concourse, which was bustling with people even at that late hour.

He found himself a corner seat in the last train to the distant suburb he lived in. The first class compartment was only half full, and most of the passengers got out at the two or three major stops on the way.

Unfolding his roll of newspapers, Raman glanced around him. He noticed that there was only himself and an old, blind beggar in the compartment. The beggar sat at the far end next to a window. Raman straightened out a newspaper, and turned to an unfinished crossword. He pondered over a clue, and inspected his watch. It was one o'clock. There were still fifteen minutes or so to go before his stop. He looked idly at the beggar. He wore a frayed, white shirt and dirty, striped pyjamas, and seemed incongruous in the first class compartment. But Raman knew that ticket checkers rarely ventured out so late in the night. The lights were dim and yellowish, giving the compartment a sepulchral air. The beggar's face was turned towards Raman. It seemed to Raman that the shiny, grey flecks in his eyes had noted every detail of his appearance. He shifted in his seat, suddenly self-conscious under the blind man's dark inspection. He turned instinctively to the crossword, and wished there were more passengers.

He glanced again at his watch, and, obliquely, he sensed the blind man fumbling with the latch of the shut window. The beggar turned again towards Raman. He spoke : 'Is someone there? Please.... willl you open the window? It is very hot.' Raman shrank back into his seat. He felt unaccountably tense. He looked out of the window and saw the electricity poles swinging past like a long row of crosses. 'Please,' he heard the beggar say again, 'I know there's someone there.'

Raman got up abruptly, walked to the window, and pushed it up.

He heard a murmured thanks as he hurried back to his seat. He buried himself in the newspaper, his face flushed, as if a mocking audience had caught him in the middle of an embarrassing act. He looked at his watch again, and wished the train would move faster.

The train, in fact, was travelling at great speed, a long row of lighted doors and windows cutting through the night. In Raman's compartment, the blind man got up and began to pace the vibrating floor. Raman watched as he moved towards the door. The beggar leant back against the compartment wall. Raman could see the back of his head, a greyish straggle of hair, fluttering slightly in the wind. The train swayed and jerked, and it occurred to him that it was dangerous for a blind man to stand at the edge of a speeding train. But it was a hot night, he told himself, and the old man evidently wanted the wind in his face, and, besides, the sightless were blessed with infallible instincts.

He filled in another clue, and inspected his watch again; there was another five minutes before his station arrived. Enough time, he thought to finish the crossword. Puzzling over an elusive word, he turned once more towards the blind man. He felt uneasy again, as if an invisible shadow was watching him. What, he thought, if the old man fell asleep? He turned abruptly to the crossword, his pen poised over the black and white net of hidden words.

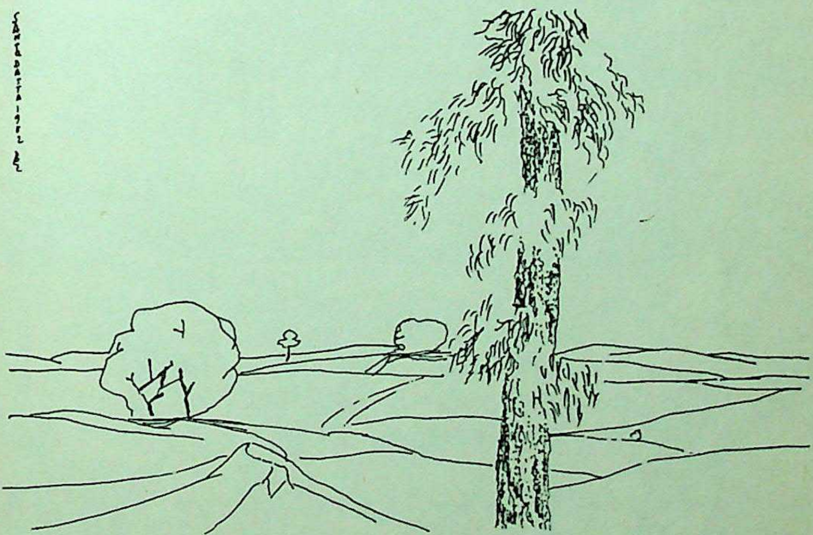
Suddenly, the sheets of the newpaper slapped against his face, and he heard the rapid, staccato beat of an oncoming train rushing past his window. He stared at the empty, lit bogies rattling past one by one, their windows throwing square shadows across his face. Raman thought morbidly of a row of mobile morgues. Then, there was only a diminishing silence as the train disappeared round a curve. He straightened out his newspaper and folded it compactly so that the crossword faced him. He filled in the last clue, his pen shaking with the movement of the train. Then, he looked up. The blind man was not there.

Raman stared, petrified. Slowly he got up, clutching his newspapers. He walked round the seats: both the entrances gaped emptily back at him. He walked round the compartment: the green seats stared at him and the overhead straps rocked eerily. A fan hummed and gyrated around its neck. He hurried to the door, leant out of the train, and looked back: the glinting tracks slid further and further away as if in a shrieking, insane race against each other.

Raman stumbled back to his corner seat. He felt sick and his hands trembled. The yellowish lights glared down at him. He felt the train losing speed, and, moments later, it had stopped at his destination.

He stepped off the train. A few other passengers had alighted and were walking towards the exit. He glanced furtively at the dark, oily wheels of the train. He watched the train leave. It slid over the platform, thudding slowly away. Its pair of red lights disappeared in the distance as if dragged by an unheeding power.

Raman was the last to leave the station. The bluish, neonlit street was deserted as he made his way towards his flat. He started at inaudible sounds. He ran in short, panicky bursts. Every now and then he glanced over his shoulder like a fugitive.



SANTO DATTA 1982 DEC.

# THE FAN

*Ved Nayar*

The fan was as small as I thought I was and it had the personality of my father—sharp features, glistening skin—quiet and protective. It arrived in the house near my birthday, in May. The schools had closed, a few days ago, for the summer holidays. Summer days in our town were shadowless and white and deserted—you could see the heat suspended in the space.

Long after, in the evening when father returned—one summer day would pass and he would bring to the hiding of Ann Frank, the news of the heat—"two horses died of heat stroke, two old men died, one woman died, two children died."

"If you go out in the sun, you will also die" — my sister would hold my chin and lift my face towards her—force me to look into her eyes—speak and walk away. Obviously, I was studying in the first standard — otherwise I wouldn't allow my sister to hold my chin. I can calculate the year—it was nineteen thirty-eight.

Just before it was dark—at about seven thirty in the evening—my father would return from his office. First of May—sheer logic—my father entered the house with the walking stick in his left hand—an awkard experience for the left hand to hold the walking stick—it looked amusing to me. The right hand held the fan—his arm appeared stretched with the weight of the fan.

Between my father and mother—to talk was to quarrel.

"You could have engaged a coolie to lift the fan for you".

"It has cost twenty-nine rupees"— the words "twenty-nine rupees" were spoken loudly—prolonged and stressed in the hoarse voice of my father.

The fan was crowned on a wooden table. The family gathered around the fan. Standing by the side of my mother, I watched my sisters and brothers work the fan—turn by turn—switch on—speed one—speed two—speed three—switch off. My mother had no desire

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and was not confident that she could work the fan. I was sure I could work it but I was not even allowed to go near it. I felt, they were unnecessarily scared. I could see—not even my index finger could get in through the guards around the blades of the fan.

Next morning—the stars were still in the sky when I woke up. Lying in my bed, I watched and waited for my mother to get up. I came down along with her from the terrace. As she busied herself in the kitchen, I slipped into the room where the fan was kept on the wooden table. Impatient and nervous I switched on the fan—the thrust of the morning cool air hitting my face and flying through my hair. I remembered my mother and switched off the fan—went to the kitchen door— she was still busy. I returned to the fan and switched it on again. And when the togetherness with the fan became boring, I switched it off. I walked to the kitchen door and announced my triumph — "I can work the fan". Then I ran to the terrace and slept.

I was awakened by a slap from my sister—the sun was already high in the sky and the terrace was warm — "Don't ever touch the fan, you will die".

According to my sister if I did anything, I would die.

"If I go on the terrace in the sun, I will die."

"If I go out of my house alone, the snake will bite me and I will die."

"If I don't come before it is dark, I will die."

"If I don't take my bath before I eat food, I will die."

"If I talk too much, I will die".

and now "If I touch the fan, I will die".

During the day, I heard all this and during the night, I dreamt of my sister and death and snakes. Always my mother came to my rescue in the dream.

Since morning, my sister is busy making arrangements for the family to sleep after lunch. The room is darkened with curtains and the bed-sheets are spread on the floor in front of the fan. Everybody is allotted a place to sleep. Because I am the youngest my place is nearest the fan. My mother chooses to sleep at the end of the row.

The room is dark and cool. I can't sleep during the day—I close my eyes for the fear of my sister and pretend, I am asleep—After sometime. I slightly open my eyes and watch the fan—its blades are revolving so fast that I can't see them. Suddenly I feel the urge to switch off the fan and run to the terrace— I look at my sister—she turns on her side—I abandon the idea. I raise myself on my elbows and watch my mother over my sisters and brothers. She is snoring and she is perspiring—the air of the fan is not reaching her. I want her to sleep in my place—here she won't perspire. Abruptly I get up—

tiptoe to the door — the door creaks when I open it — my sister, without opening her eyes roars—"don't go out in the sun, come and sleep". I leave the door open—return and lie down. I stare at her for sometime and then watch the fan. Again I am tempted to go to the terrace. I walk to the door on my toes and then run to the stairs—two stairs at a time and I am on the terrace.

The terrace is white with heat and there is no shade. The sky is clear but the sun doesn't allow me to look at the sky. I stand by the railing and watch the leafless trees of the jungle around our house. My glance moves from branch to branch and from tree to tree. No bird is flying—they are all perched on the branches of the trees—exhausted by the heat, they are breathing heavily. The air is still and the world is silent and burning. Suddenly the birds start flying and crying. A snake is around—I know. I scan the ground and a snake appears—moving sluggishly towards our house—he is also exhausted with the heat and bored with the birds and their cries. I grow pale, stand still and I am scared—even though I know, the snake can't reach me on the terrace.

The snake has reached the wall of the room where everybody is sleeping. I imagine—the snake will go into the room and bite my sister—a smile spreads on my face.

But my mother is sleeping near this wall—I leave the terrace—run to the room. There is no place from where the snake can come in. Still I stand near the wall — when the snake comes in, I will cry and wake my mother. I stand there for a long time. My sister opens her eyes in her sleep and shouts again— "Why are you not sleeping"?—I go to the allotted place and lie down—I feel drowsy after the watch—soon I am asleep and forget the snake.

When I wake up, nobody is in the room—The fan is still on—I don't even want to avail the opportunity to switch it off—but run to the kitchen and press my face on the jali-door.

"O, Maa".

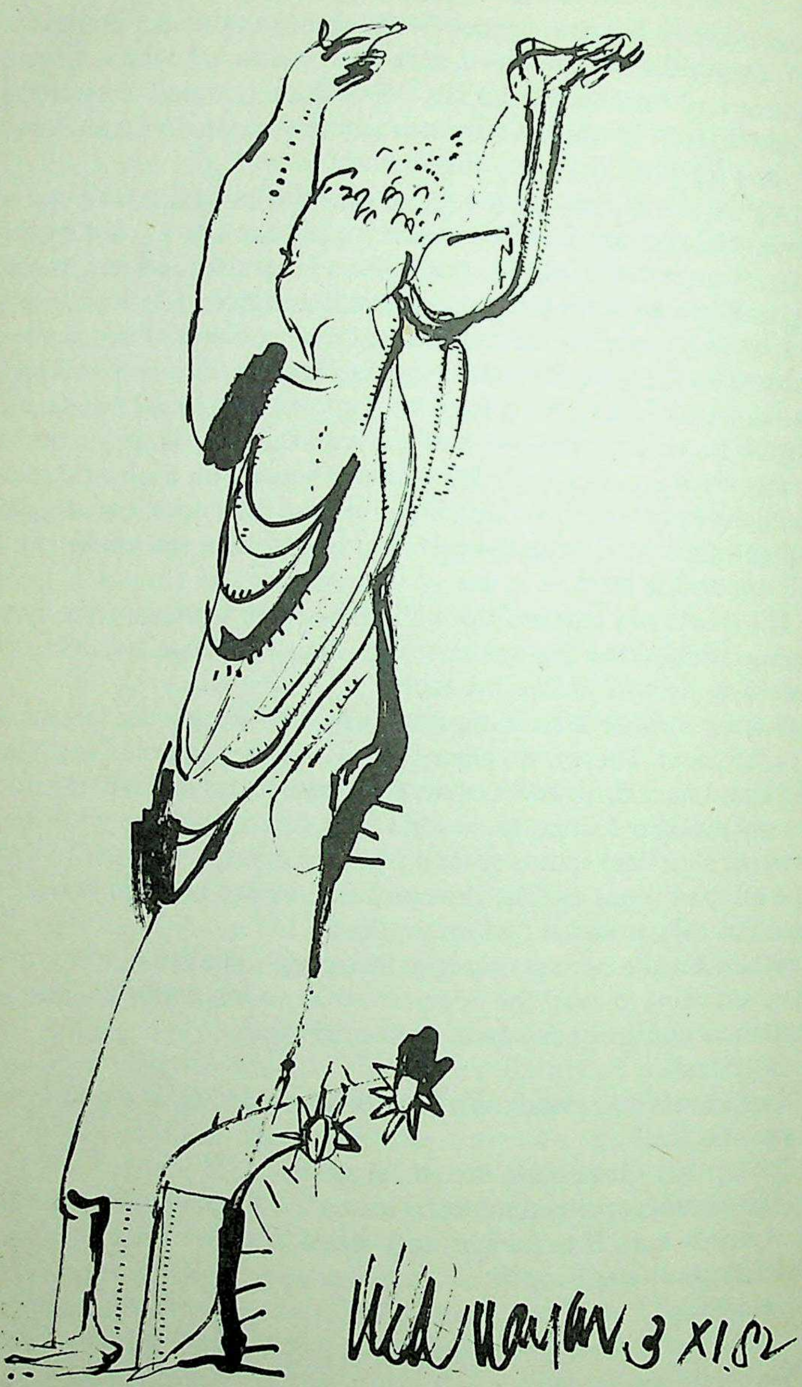
From amidst her work, she tilts her face and looks at me and I set my gaze on her.

I want her to speak to me—I linger on.

She guesses my need for her—leaves her work—comes towards me — bends herself to be near to me and asks.

"You want anything?"

"Nothing."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# Book Reviews

*Between Cultures* : Pratima Bowes, Allied Publishers Private Limited, New Delhi, 1986, 230 Pages, Price : Rs. 150/-

This is a serious study on comparative philosophy that seeks to establish that the living values flowing from two different world-views—the architectonic and the organic—must inevitably be as different as their philosophic premises Dr Bowes seeks, in addition, to bring comprehension of each view to the other, so that misunderstandings arising from the look of this do not continue to bedevil human relationships. More: the understanding that she seeks to create is at a deep intellectual level—hers is not the sort of appeal for superficial co-existence that some peace-lovers have been apt to make.

What is the difference between the architectonic and the organic world-view, the first respresenting the European and Europe-derived cultures, a developed society view; the second, the Hindu view of the world, held in a developing society? Briefly, the architectonic view is dominated by "the idea of the purpose that a system is to serve.... Wholes are interesting only when they are seen to constitute a system serving a particular purpose." In the organic world-view, "a whole is thought to be given, and whatever is given is thought to constitute a unity without any prior consideration of whether the elements found to the whole are consistent with one another in a given logical scheme."

This distinction is reiterated through the book. Thus : "The architectonic model is constructed around a purpose and a purpose needs a person who feels it, hence the insistence on the personality aspect of God." (39) and : "An organic unity is taken as given and the differences that appear within that unity are also taken as given... An architectonic unity is conceived to have come into being through being constituted by conscious will, decision, design and purpose to serve a particular end". (112) "Western culture (architectonic) is supposed to be based on the valuation of man as an individual whereas an organic culture, such as that of India, on the valuation of man as the member of a group."(206)

Dr Bowes is knowledgeable both in European and in Hindu philosophy and explains how she came to study both for professional purposes. Born and basically educated in India, where she read philosophy up to the M.A. degree level, she then took a Ph.D. in England. For years she found the "Western tradition" much more to her taste. She married an Englishman—hence BOWES—, published a book on western philosophy, then "came back to India for a shortwhile after divorce". By now a British citizen by marriage, she regarded the "West" as her intellectual home. She returned to England, became a lecturer in philosophy at the University of Sussex, a school-based, not a subject-based university that teaches "various contextuals relevant to their particular area of operation". She taught a course entitled "The Hindu Intellectual Tradition" and had to study intensively in preparation to teach it.

All this is useful because it explains Dr Bowes's progressive credentials for the task to which she addresses herself. She is always clear and, even if she does repeat herself from time to time, she does so largely to avoid being misunderstood, for she recognises that she is writing about an area and concepts on which there is some intellectual confusion and a high degree of cultural sensitivity and partisanship.

As I am not free of this partisanship, let me say at once that, having studied philosophy at Oxford and never rejected the architectonic world-view, I sometimes feel that Dr Bowes errs in the opposite direction, in explaining to the finest point possible the underlying philosophy that gives rise to Hindu culture and the living values of its people. Her explanations often commend themselves to anyone who has lived in India long enough to understand her, though he/she does not necessarily share these values. There are passages in which, much to her credit, Dr Bowes makes a value judgement of the architectonic world-view in its favour. For instance, she writes on page 50: "Is it then the case that the alleviation of the suffering of others finds as important a place in Hinduism as it does in Christianity?" And she answers: *"I think not* (italics mine). It has a place, but not as important a place, and the reason is a different attitude to suffering itself that developed as part of the two world-views." However and whatever the explanation for the difference, many of us would prefer the world view that made it obligatory in religious practice to relieve suffering whenever conscious of it. Dr Bowes does not go so far.

There are other facets of her analysis in which she is more open to criticism. "In the (architectonic) world-view" she writes (72) "truth means a system and system-building requires this kind of power to sort out the consistent from the inconsistent". Most of us, raised on logic, would not be tempted to reject this "either/or logic". Where two contradictories are at war, only one can be true. We are indeed constantly bewildered by a world-view that can accept both A and Non-A as true, within the same universe of discourse, based on reason.

Dr Bowes admits freely that "Hindus took no care about dates, they wrote on most things but no history, and the historical perspective' is so badly missing that few clues exist for other people to date them in any satisfactory manner." So far, so good. But this does not excuse her two casual references to untouchability for which those holding the organic world-view are not criticised. She says : "How the practice of untouchability came into being I do not know, but since my thesis is not that societies exhibiting a world-view are wholly consistent systems—nothing is—such contradiction does not prove, for me, that the world-view I am talking about does not exist as a tendency to see and evaluate things in a certain way that we can find in the different facet of a culture." (125) We would be much more willing to take the author at her cultural word, if she plainly condemned the fact of untouchability, whenever it originated, instead of casually referring to it as if it did not demand more careful critical examination.

Dr Bowes has taught western philesophy in England long enough to observe how strongly the English education system requires its students to take a critical view of their reading in all disciplines. As this is one of my own most valued legacies from my years at Oxford, I am with the British bias, and against Dr Bowes's view, that this is not necessarily a valuable attitude. The architectonic view in this respect appeals to me because an unreasoning acceptance of any view, no matter how old, is the direct road to intellectual stagnation.

Dr Bowes more or less implies that those who hold the architectonic world-view are guilty of cultural arrogance. "I find the imposition of architectonic values on every one a deliberately destructive act." Perhaps, and certainly this imposition tended to characterise Imperial Britain in India. But the Indian elite that, according to Dr Bowes, also holds this view, is now free to reject it since Britain no longer rings the school call-bells. Yet the elite does not do so.

There is a final chapter called "Concerning India" in which Dr Bowes advances possible solutions for lacunae in the Indian system of values. These are interesting but will take a long time to work, if they ever do. They also seem like an afterthought, for this is not the purpose of her book. She scores highly on analysis. She is knowledgeable and clear, though quite as unbiased as she thinks. She is less convincing on solutions to socio-cultural problems in India. For she is primarily an analytic philosopher, and is worth reading while on this aspect of her subject.

**Muriel Wasi**

*Narrative Forms and Translation* : Edited by Sudhakar Marathe and Meenakshi Mukherjee. Chanakya Publications, 1986. 232 pages, Rs. 130/-

The seminar has come to stay, and books selectively reporting seminars are now, it seems inevitable. One learned book in ten, on a rough assessment, is a collective production prefaced by explanatory introduction and rounded off by a postscript to be sure that nothing has been left to the reader's imagination or to his discernment. The present volume is such a book.

In all these assemblages, one is justified in asking whether the kaleidoscope of informed opinion is worth bringing to book. The two editors of this book believe that it is, though they concede, in their introduction that several contributions that relied heavily on physical demonstration in film and music, had either to be dropped altogether, or suffered by being reduced to a printed text.

But what was the provocation for this seminar-book, and has its provoked purpose been served by Narrative Forms and Transformations? The provocation, say the editors, is the recognition that most available critical discourse and narrative is of a limited nature, and that it is heavily dependent on the text and use of the novel as a central form. In India, they argue, the novel is not a central form and they note "with satisfaction" when the papers came in that most participants "instead of safely drawing upon familiar western texts as examples, preferred to focus on areas around us that are relatively unexamined." The scope of the book was finally limited to music, the visual arts, the film and the printed word. Of the 12 papers included, only five deal with the printed text, four of them with the novel. The introduction also makes the point that the book is for the initiated, and that though its essential accent is literary, it has tended to become inter-disciplinary in implication.

So far so good. And some of the papers are very good, though I am not at all sure that postgraduate students in good departments of literature at Indian universities have much to learn from them. For one thing, though the editors find to their "satisfaction" that most participants avoided "western" texts and preferred to focus on areas around us, yet in terms of literary value, this is a doubtful criterion, and one that gives some of us little satisfaction. Why, for instance, should I turn from the narrative techniques of *Wuthering Heights* or even *longo intervallo, The Moonstone*, to Bedi's *Ek Chadar Maili Si*, as Krishan Rayan does, when the excellence of the two first texts is so patently superior to that of the third? The mere fact that a text is based on India and is "relatively unexamined" does not justify any satisfaction that it is worth analysing in preference to an examined western text of obvious distinction.

This is part of the sentimental approach of Indo-Anglian writing that we should have recovered from, if we mean to set standards of excellence for our students. There is, in literary matters, no merit outside literary merit: the cultural dimension is secondary, and is worth analysing only if its total achievement, literary-cum-cultural, is of a standard to provoke new and valuable thought.

The case for examining Prem Chand's *Godaan* as Meenakshi Mukherjee does, for its narrative form, arising out of the culture and ideology that sustains the writer, possibly for no conscious literary purpose, is stronger and yields better results.

But what do we gain from these assembled expositions of narrative forms and transformations? What new insights does such a collection bring us? Marathe's contribution on the *Beginning* is not uninteresting. He says: "As the end may be *in* the beginning, but is not the beginning, this analysis (of *The House of Seven Gables)* connects the beginning with the subsequent narrative; similarly, the end of studying a beginning cannot be in itself, so the analysis attempts an interpretation of the novel on the basis of its beginning." No one who comprehended this would contest it, but it exemplifies the reasoning and writing in this book. At its best, it restates as incontrovertible fact, and possibly introduces us to the structural, as a departure from, the traditional approach to narrative. At its worst, it is superfluous to the serious student of literature. Mr Marathe is of course free to choose his own illustrations, but it would have been instructive to see how he handled such a beginning as Forster's in *Howards End*, or James's in *The Turn of the Screw* or the enigmatic beginnings in fiction and biography of Gertrude Stein.

Not always directed at the heart of the seminar, but interesting for cultural reasons is Maria Couto's *The Raj in Fiction and Film*, that compares Forster's and Lean's presentation of the former's *A Passage to India*, and that deals well with the inadequacies of Lean's transformation. However this, as the Editors point out, is a study more of theme than form. Other contributions, more directly related to form are Mukherjee's *The Paradox of Godaan* that has the merit of being clear on a first reading, and Sivaramakrishna's *Narrative, Fiction and 'Reality'*, that maintains that aspects of reality determine the narrative form most suitable to their presentation. Susie Tharu has the distinction of weaving the *Oral History* of a group of simple women in Andhra into her theoretical argument that "the truth of life often stands outside discourse." If this points up the inadequacy of the narrative form to a portrait of living, there is some force in it, whatever the class or sex of the people chosen for study.

It is strange that not a single paper deals at any length, or in any depth with the problem of Time in narrative. No one discusses Hemingway's compressed technique or Faulkner's idiosyncratic narrative in *Sartoris* or *The Sound and the Fury.* Marathe does refer to Virginia Woolf's beginning in *To The Lighthouse* but, as he is concerned in his paper with beginnings only, he does not allude to the interlude *Time Passes* in the novel, that appears to support the view that no narrator is entirely free to dispense with the clock.

The Postscript by Shiv Deo Singh Chibber makes life easier for the common reader, because it spells out the purpose of the seminar and points the way to further investigation. It also prepares the way for the structural approach to form and content of a text. Though we may wonder whether it is wise to attempt to make a science of what is patently an art, Mr Chibber may be right when he describes the seminar as a "melting pot of ideas" that offers us further possibilities of study, that are not without value.

**Muriel Wasi**

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